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DETECTIVE STORIES

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

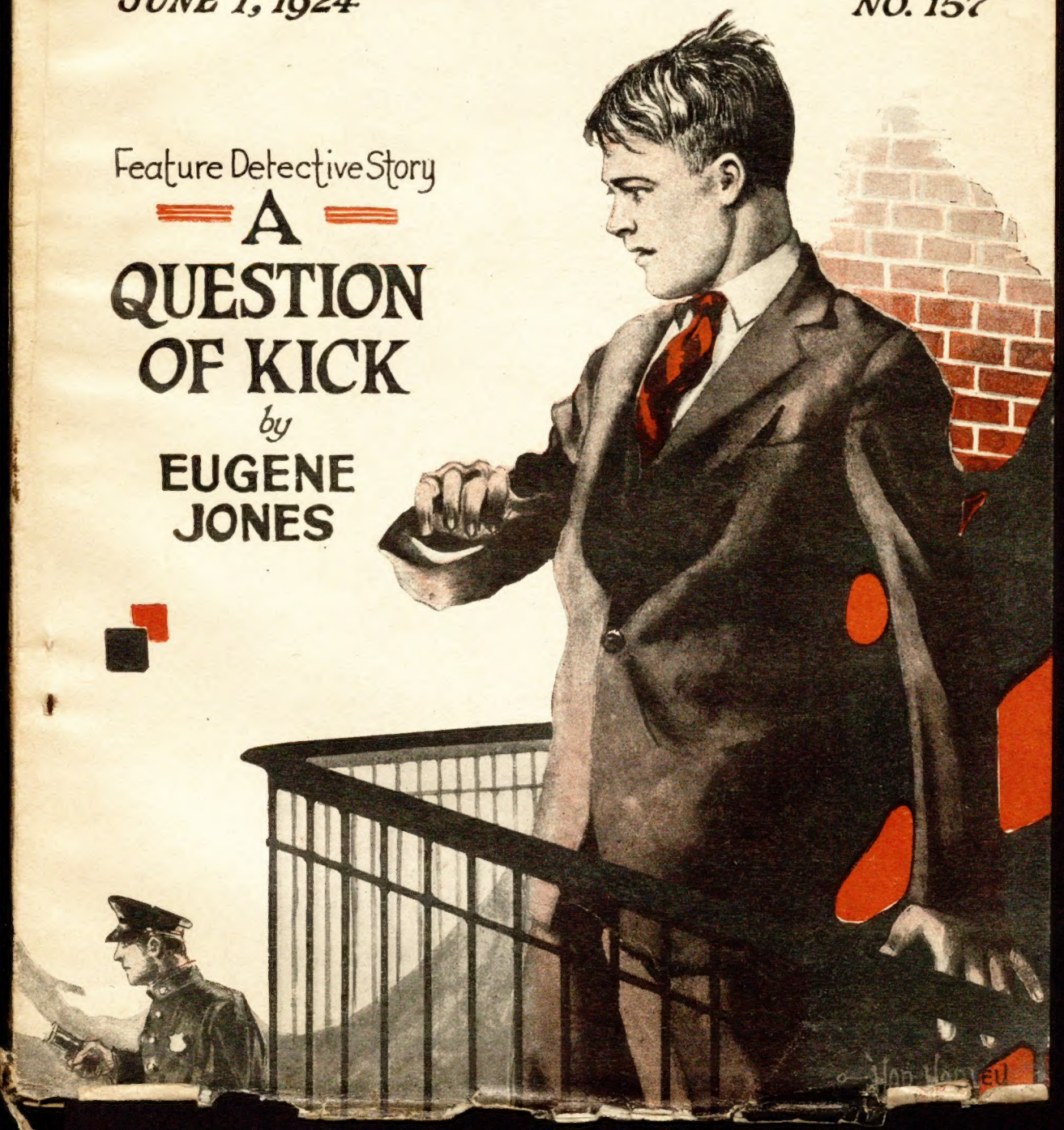
JUNE 1, 1924 NO. 157

Feature Detective Story

A QUESTION OF KICK

by

EUGENE JONES



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Our Coming Number!

WE wish to call your special attention to the increased number of stories we are now issuing in this magazine, and you will also notice that every one of them has been selected with unusual care, so our readers will get only the very best. The feature in the next number is one of the finest and most exciting novelettes we have ever published. The title is

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It is full of interesting adventures with crooks, and contains a good detective plot. DON'T MISS THIS DRAMATIC STORY!

———oOo———

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No amount of work or expense is being spared to make the next number one of the best we have ever issued. Get a copy. You will enjoy every line of the immense amount of good reading matter it will contain.

THE EDITOR.

A QUESTION OF KICK

by Eugene Jones

CHAPTER ONE

JACK HALE, reporter for the *Evening Advance*, and short-story writer in the embryo, noted the falling snow outside his window. Straightway he grew restless, for snow always suggested a veil behind which anything might happen.

"Algeria," he remarked to a huge cat curled up beside him on the divan, "Murray's just sent back my last story. They say it hasn't enough dramatic action." He sighed. "But how the devil am I going to get a plot with a kick when life's just one damn Subway ride after another?"

Algeria yawned daintily, licked her coal-black chops, and regarded him through yellow, unblinking eyes.

"Why do you think they dubbed me 'Scurry' at the office?" he asked whimsically. "Because I'm always doing it, in hopes of waylaying and appropriating one of those great ideas which are said to wander about, hunting somebody with enough talent to express them. But always, Algeria, at the end of every assignment I find either a Methodist convention or a prohibition lecture!"

The cat yawned again, stretching her body luxuriously; she was quite accustomed to Hale's confidences. Scurry got up to refill his pipe, caught sight of himself in a mirror, and paused.

"Ah," he muttered, "my eyes should be black, I should be six-foot-two and wear a sinister, scheming face. Then, no doubt, adventure would fairly jump at me. I wonder if it's possible for a short, blue-eyed man to have an adventure?"

Shaking his head, he wandered over to the window. The snowflakes patted the panes gently; here and there in the street a muffled pedestrian braved the storm. New York was very unreal with its lights dimmed by the white whirl and its sounds of traffic hushed.

Restlessly he fussed about the room for a minute or so, then sat down at his desk. There must be a story in that snow-storm if only he could find it—a story with a kick, too!

As the clock on the mantel struck eight he suddenly heard the street door of his rooming-house slam and the chain-bolt go up. Who would bolt the street door so early? After a moment the clack-clack of high heels sounded on the stairs, not with the deliberate dignity of Miss Winch, aged fifty, who lived on the floor above, but rapid, staccato, as if each step presented a barrier to be overcome as speedily as possible. Hale, toying with his pencil, wondered about it as they clattered down the hall..

CHAPTER TWO

IT happened in Tiffin's jewelry store. The young salesman had laid his plans carefully. He knew an inquisitive floor-manager went the rounds every night before the clerks left to make sure each little velvet pocket of the trays in the show-cases held its allotted treasure. He knew that immediately thereafter certain bonded employees collected the trays containing the more valuable jewels and placed them in Tiffin's safe-deposit vault.

The salesman's plan was quite simple. One afternoon he showed a customer some gems. While returning them to their place in the show-case he made a profitable exchange; a diamond pendant worth fifteen thousand dollars went into his pocket and a paste imitation into the tray.

A little later a young woman entered the store and sought out this particular salesman.

"What did you want me for, Wade?" she asked.

"Had a chance to pick up a birthday present for you," he smiled, showing her a little blue box. "Take it along, but you mustn't open it until to-night. Promise? I'll be home early."

She did.

Whereupon he removed a ten-dollar bill from his wallet and, placing it with the little box in a package carrier, dispatched it to the cashier's desk.

The cashier, opening the box according to regulations, saw a gold pin listed at seven dollars and a quarter nestling in the cotton. He was about to make the necessary change and toss the box to the wrapping clerk when the manager of the store, who happened to be standing by the desk, reached down and removed pin and cotton. Beneath was a diamond pendant.

The cashier started. "What do you know about that!" he muttered. "What'll I do, Mr. Stengle?"

Stengle's eyes rested on the girl waiting at the counter. "Let her have it," he returned. "I've been wanting to get something on her. Tell Jim to follow her and report to me where she goes."

And so, after a brief delay, the neatly wrapped box was returned to the salesman, who passed it to the girl. As she went out she did not notice a man close behind her.

Believing he had put one over on Tiffin's, the salesman remained at his post the rest of the day. No one examined the tray containing the fake, and closing hour found him free to go home. He was smiling to himself as he started to cross Fifth avenue. Perhaps he was a bit too preoccupied; perhaps a certain taxi driver was trying to make a train. At any rate, one minute the salesman was threading his way through the tangle of vehicles with the knowledge of his success singing in his ears, and the next he lay dead beneath the wheels of the taxi, while the ashen-faced driver tried to explain to the police how it happened.

CHAPTER THREE

AND twenty-four hours later Scurry, sitting at his desk, heard the clack-clack of high heels coming down his hall.

The next instant his door opened, a girl stepped in and carefully closed and locked the door behind her. Scurry sat and stared, his blue eyes very round. She was young and—and pretty; without apparent mental effort he noted this. Also she was laboring under tremendous excitement—or was it fear? Pale, lips compressed, she faced him, her back to the door, as if daring him to put her out. He got a rather indefinite picture of her in that first flabbergasting minute—just an impression of small features, gray, defiant eyes and tense figure.

Something burst in Scurry's brain; his Great Adventure was here!

"Good-evening," he said; "you are late!" And his calmness surprised him.

"What!" The word was vibrant with fear.

"I said you were late; I've been waiting some time for you."

"You've been—— Listen! You must hide me. Do you understand, *hide* me. They will break in." She was bending forward now, one hand at her bosom, her eyes searching his face. "I don't know what you mean by 'expecting me.' Are—are you a Tiffin detective?"

"No," he said, "I'm an Episcopal journalist."

Her expression told him that she doubted his sanity. He chuckled. "I beg your pardon, madam; go on with the plot."

Her gaze left his face then, sweeping the room with pathetic eagerness.

"Detectives are in the street now. They saw me come in here. Please, *please* hide me! I haven't stolen anything, but if those men catch me"—she shivered—"if they catch me they will search me."

"Who the deuce are you, anyway?" asked Scurry.

"I—can't tell you."

"Yet you want me to protect you. Why did you come here?"

"I didn't—that is, I mean I didn't *plan* to come here. I—I was chased."

They heard a tremendous hammering from below, several shouts and the snap of the chain-bolt tightening.

"There!" she panted, "they're coming!"

"If you aren't a criminal, why do you object to being searched?"

"Because——" Her pause ended in a half-choked cry. "Oh, can't you just—just trust me? Afterwards I'll explain. I'll make it worth your while. I'll pay——"

He was conscious of his landlady's shrill voice raised above the voices of the men outside, thin, angry and frightened. And he was certain she would not long prevent their entrance.

He nodded toward the street. "Are they plainclothes cops?"

"I imagine so," panted the girl.

Came the thud of heavy feet on the stairs, a great shuffling in the hall.

What should he do? If he protected her he might be getting himself into a nice mess, yet hadn't he been wishing for adventure? Besides, something about her appealed to him; he was sorry for her, no matter what her transgressions. And perhaps she hadn't done anything wrong; perhaps she was a victim of circumstances. That thought decided him.

"Quick!" he whispered. "The closet here. Get behind my clothes and stand *still.*"

The girl dashed across the room, and for an instant he heard her stumbling over his shoes. Then Scurry, crossing unhurriedly to the hall door, opened it.

He found himself facing three men—undoubtedly detectives; any New Yorker could have picked them out in a crowd as such. They wore derbies, two-day beards and that peculiarly aggressive attitude born of petty authority. No sooner was the door open than they shoved past him into the room.

"Who the hell are you?" snapped the foremost.

Scurry, fortifying himself behind his desk, appeared to consider.

"Julius Cæsar," he said at length, and nodding toward the big cat on the divan, "that's Algeria, the crown prince. Now suppose you return the compliment."

The man flipped back his coat, revealing a badge.

"How does that strike you, Julius Cæsar?" he bellowed fiercely.

"As I live, a bull!" grinned Hale.

"Look here, if you hand me any o' your sass I'll give you a ride in th' wagon! We want somebody who's hidin' in this buildin'. She swiped some shiners from Tiffin's."

"Tiffin's? The jewelry store? Oh, I see. So you're Tiffin detectives. The term is explained. Never mind, I sympathize with you; I was once accused of it myself."

"Accused of—say, young feller," and the officer hammered his red fist on the desk, "you can the comedy!"

The landlady, peering around the door-jamb like a frightened rabbit, sniffled. Hale did not lose his smile, but his tone became crisp.

"All right; what do you want?"

'That thief!"

"Then go and find her. Do you think I'm hiding her?" He drew his card from his pocket and exhibited it. "Ever see me at headquarters? The staff of the *Advance*

isn't noted for interfering with the police."

The plainclothes man hesitated. His voice lost its domineering note, but he showed his determination.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, sir—we aim to treat newspaper men right—but we gotter search your rooms."

Scurry felt a chill of apprehension, and his heart went out to the girl standing rigid in the closet. His lips tightened; he dropped his hand into the open desk drawer.

"Very well; show me your search warrant."

They looked at each other, shuffled uneasily.

"We ain't got a warrant, Mr. Hale; but we saw this woman come in here, and we want to run her out. You wouldn't be unreasonable over a little thing like that, would you? It won't be a minute's job; of course she ain't here. Get a move on, boys."

"Wait!" Scurry withdrew his hand from the drawer, and with it came an automatic. He was leaning over the desk now, his round face determined. "I'll give you three seconds to beat it. The law says I can defend my own property. Come back here with the proper authority and I'll make no objections."

The foremost officer took a hasty backward step.

"You better put away that gun, Mr. Hale. You're violatin' the Sullivan law. What's the big idea, anyway?"

"There's no 'big idea'; I simply won't allow you to search my rooms without a warrant. How do I know that isn't a fake badge of yours?"

"You'll be sorry for this," muttered the detective, eyeing the business-end of the pistol uneasily. "You've as good as told us you've got the girl here."

"I *said* three seconds," reminded Scurry.

The three men gave ground; evidently they had not counted on armed resistance.

"We'll be back," growled one of them, "and meantime this shack'll be watched. Get me? *Watched*. If you or your lady friend tries to crush out——"

The journalist made a slight movement with his automatic. There was a general scramble for the hall, the sound of feet on the stairs, then the bang of the front door. But several moments elapsed before Scurry carefully closed and locked his *own* door. Afterward he said:

"They've gone."

The girl came from the closet unsteadily, her face drawn. She was far prettier than he had first thought, and in her features was a refinement which puzzled him. Her small mouth had a pathetic droop, her eyes were straight-forward; she met his gaze squarely.

"Now," he began, "I believe you had better be mighty frank. I've no desire to pry into your private affairs, but if we're going to get you clear of this mess we've got to understand each other. Have you anything on you that don't belong to you?"

"Yes," she said, sitting on the edge of his Morris-chair as if poised for flight.

"Something—er—stolen from Tiffin's?"

"Yes." But her eyes remained honest; he saw no guilt in them.

"Will you tell me how you got it?"

"No."

He sucked at his pipe a moment.

"I don't believe you stole it yourself," he said quietly, "and I'm not going to ask you."

She remained silent.

"But," he went on, "those men were Tiffin detectives, and I happen to know a big jewelry store never stops. It's something like a bank. You will be shadowed, perhaps arrested on a trumped-up charge—anything to keep you in reach until you give yourself away. The Tiffin outfit is watching the house now. When you leave—provided you leave before the warrant arrives—you will be grabbed at the front door and taken to the nearest precinct station where a matron will search you. So you've got to get rid of the stuff."

He wasn't sure what he was expecting, certainly not what he got. The girl nodded eagerly.

"That's exactly what I'm trying to do—return the diamonds. I'm trying to reach a man who has the influence to protect me." She hesitated. "Not only my reputation is

at stake, but somebody else's. It's somebody"—she choked—"that I loved. I want his memory clean; he's dead now."

Scurry's sympathy for her increased; she was so obviously unfit to cope with New York, so slender, so pathetic! And chance had sent her to him.

"Of course I don't understand," he answered, "but that is of no consequence. Who is the man?"

"Mr. Tiffin himself," she said.

"Mr. Tiffin! You don't mean the millionaire——"

"Yes."

"But I thought he never had anything to do with the business. I thought he had a manager."

"He has." She was locking and unlocking her fingers in her nervousness. "The manager's name is Stengle. But it's Mr. Tiffin I must give the jewels to."

"Oh!" And Scurry drew a long breath. He saw light, yet he fought back the obvious theory. It wasn't possible that this girl with the honest gray eyes and pathetic mouth was anything to Wadsworth Tiffin.

"How do you happen to know him?" he questioned sharply.

She flushed.

"He is a relative of mine—a cousin."

"I see," he said, but there was relief in his voice. "Now," he went on, "those fellows will be back any minute with a search warrant. Do you know where you can find Tiffin?"

"I think so," she said. "He told me if I ever needed to communicate with him after eight o'clock in the evening, and he wasn't at home, to try Three-ninety-seven West Fifty —— street. He's probably there now; his man said over the phone that he wouldn't be back until late."

Scurry hurriedly wrote the address in his notebook. Then he turned again to the girl.

"I have a plan; you must give me the swag—er—pardon me—the jewels. When you have gone out the front way and straight into the hands of the police I will tackle the fire-escape. I doubt if they are watching the rear of the house. One way or another I'll get the stuff to Tiffin. Now you're bound to be arrested and taken to the nearest precinct station. Give 'em a lively time. Insist they have no right to search you, demand to see a lawyer—anything you can think of to keep them from getting wise too soon to the fact that you've put one over on 'em. They can't hold you without evidence, and they won't try. But remember, when you leave the station you must do nothing suspicious; go straight home.

"Of course," he added, "my whole plan depends on your being willing to trust me. There's no way for you to be sure I'm on the level. I've taken your word that you didn't steal the diamonds; you'll have to take mine that I'll hand them safe to Tiffin."

She shook her head.

"Thank you, Mr. Hale. Under the circumstances I wouldn't hesitate to risk it as far as you're concerned, but I wouldn't part with—with what you speak of. Let me try the fire-escape."

"No; you'd have to cross a dozen backyard walls and sneak out through some alley. They would nab you in a hurry. You better trust me——"

From the street came the sudden clang of a patrol bell. The girl whitened, started to rise, but Scurry was on his feet first, bending over her.

"Give me those diamonds!" he ordered.

Their gaze met, her gray eyes troubled and fearful, his blue ones determined and honest. And in that second, while the patrol bell jangled persistently, she surrendered. From the bosom of her shirtwaist she drew a tiny package. He took it quickly, stowing it in his breast pocket.

"Now," he continued, "go down to the door. If the cops start to come up here, scream. That'll warn me I've got to hustle. By the way, what shall I tell Tiffin?"

"Just say Joan Fenton sent him that package. Say—say her brother Wade took it by mistake. He will understand." She offered him her hand timidly. "Thank you, Mr. Hale; I shall never forget."

He wanted to ask her a dozen questions, but the patrol was stopping before the house, and he heard the crunch of men's feet on the snow.

"Good luck," he said, "and don't worry."

Her backward glance as she fled down the narrow hallway toward the stairs was sufficiently grateful to quicken his blood.

CHAPTER FOUR

THERE were several things to do at once. First Hale locked his door on the inside and shot the bolt; that would delay the police a bit. Next he put on a heavy sweater and pulled a soft hat well over his face. From his desk he took his automatic, his flashlight and an extra clip of shells. As he snapped off the lights and hurried across the room he heard a woman's scream—not of fright, but of warning.

It was a simple matter to duck through a rear window onto the fire-escape, and to close the window silently from the outside. Snow was still falling; it fluttered about him, clinging to the iron framework and making his footing precarious. Through the storm loomed the line of buildings fronting on the next street, black skeletons with occasional yellow eyes where a shade was drawn over a lighted window.

Scurry descended rapidly. He had reached the last flight when something below caught his eye. At the foot of the ladder lounged a figure, doubtless a policeman sent to stop precisely what was occurring. That he had not been discovered Scurry felt certain. But what was he to do? In a few moments at most the police would break into his rooms. To remain crouched on the fire-escape meant certain capture—capture and conviction as a receiver of stolen goods. He gave his attention to the officer under him, who appeared to be a very fair-sized cop indeed. And right there Scurry had an inspiration. He swung free of the ladder, hung a minute by his arms, then dropped like a meteor.

He had gauged his fall well; his legs encircled a bull neck, his hands closed on a visored cap. Almost as he lit he brought the butt of his automatic down with a thud on the other's skull.

By reason of their profession the police are trained to expect surprises, yet no amount of training could have helped young Hale's victim. He grunted deeply, feelingly, expelled a tremendous breath and went to sleep. Making sure he had not struck too hard, Scurry dragged his big body a little further under the fire-escape, where any one opening the area door would be sure to stumble over it. Then he examined the narrow yard.

It was a singular thing that after having lived in the same rooms for two years, and after having looked out over the same panorama three hundred and sixty-five times per year, he could not for the life of him remember a single detail of it. He was stumped. Which way lay safety? Certainly not back through his own rooming-house. Should he vault the rear fence or the fence to the right or left?

Suddenly a voice shouted down from above:

"Hey, you, Murphy, seen anything?"

Scurry correctly guessed that the person thus addressed would not answer. And after a pause the voice persisted:

"I say, Murphy!"

He caught the gleam of a flashlight on the fire-escape. There was no time to lose; in another minute Murphy's silence would bring a swarm of policemen to investigate. He chose the rear wall, jumped for a handhold and swung himself up. But just as he prepared to drop into the darkness on the other side the beam of the flashlight caught him. There was a yell from the direction of his windows, followed by a pistol shot, and Scurry, scrambling wildly, felt the thud of a bullet in the boards beneath him. No chance now to throw off his pursuers on a false scent. If anything was to save him, it must be his own short legs. Regardless of what might lurk in the darkness of the next yard, he dropped.

Already he could hear the chase taken up. Neighboring windows were raised and curl-papered heads poked out, while from beyond the wall of the houses came the clang-clang of a second patrol. Scurry fled. And as he fled he considered matters. It was a little difficult to recognize in this panting fugitive the Jack Hale of

yesterday. Gone was his reputation and his job provided his identity became known. But he was not going to be caught; he kept saying it over and over between shut teeth.

As nearly as he could judge he was about two fences ahead of the police. He could not long hold his own in such a race. The snow still fell, hiding every possible landmark. He had no means of knowing whether he had traversed half of the block or a third of it, whether he was deliberately entering a trap or heading toward freedom. Panting, slipping on the snow-covered flagging, he kept on grimly. At the next fence he was delayed by a formidable strip of barbed wire, and when he had torn his way through the police were in the yard he had just vacated. Before he could climb the wall ahead it was a certainty that the foremost of his pursuers would catch sight of him. He hesitated, giving his attention to the house which loomed dark and forbidding at his right. Ah, the fire-escape. An iron ladder hung to within a half-story of the ground, and beneath the ladder stood a barrel.

He mounted the slippery barrel gingerly, but with utmost speed, and, standing erect, extended his arms for the ladder above. They merely clawed the air. Putting all his strength into his legs, he jumped. His fingers closed on an iron rung and he drew himself up just as a policeman swung over the wall.

Scurry waited on the skeleton framework with held breath, for should the man in the court below think to play his flashlight upward he would instantly discover the fugitive. It was a difficult moment; his pulse hammered, his throat went dry. Crouching there, it seemed that his bulk must be plainly visible from the yard, a perfect target for police pistols. One after another came the blue-coated figures until he counted six. If they examined the snow they would find his footprints leading to the barrel—he couldn't see how they missed that—but evidently they had decided he was heading for the avenue at the end of the block. And so, with a great crunching of feet, they barely paused to make sure he was not in the court itself.

When the last of them was out of sight over the next wall Scurry allowed himself a sigh. He was safe for the time being, but what lay in store for him? His only remaining path to the street lay through this building. He grinned as he thought of the charges piling up against him. First, resisting an officer, then assault and battery, and now—now house-breaking. He put his hand to his breast pocket to make sure the diamond the girl had given him was safe. He was shivering partly from cold and partly from reaction as he scrambled up the fire-escape. He knew he had little time to lose, for presently the police would learn they had been tricked and double back to pick up his tracks. Thank the Lord, it was snowing. In fifteen minutes all trace of his footprints would be obliterated.

Scurry cautiously tried the windows on the first floor, finding them locked. The second and third floors were equally impregnable, and after that came the roof. A dim, black figure in the whirl of snow, he picked his way around chimneys and vent-pipes until he reached the scuttle. If it were barred he faced almost certain disaster because he had never learned even the rudiments of burglary. At first his numbed fingers failed to move the heavy wooden hatch. He took the butt of his automatic and used it as a pry. Suddenly the scuttle surrendered with a frightful groan of rusty hinges. His heart missed a beat; surely the noise must have penetrated to every room of the house. To the man on the roof it sounded like the scream of doom.

Crouching there, peering into the blackness, he waited for the excited voices of the inmates, the pound of feet. But he heard nothing. After several moments he risked using his flashlight, which revealed a flight of dusty steps already sprinkled with snow. Scurry's face took on a do-or-die expression; he held his pistol very tightly and let himself down through the trap, closing the scuttle by inches.

At the foot of the steps he found himself in a long hall, with dark rooms yawning on each side. Either the family were out, or else they did not infest the third floor in the evening. Peering down the

stair-well into the lower hall, which was lit by a solitary gas-jet, he heard an indistinct murmur of voices as if the persons speaking were behind a closed door. His only hope of escape lay in sneaking past the room from which issued the voices. Waiting several moments to make sure there was no immediate danger of discovery, he crept down with his heart pounding against his ribs. Fortunately the stairs were carpeted. If he could reach the light on the newel-post and extinguish it unobserved his chances would be better. Four steps more—three. His arm was outstretched for the burner, when a quick tread sounded behind a door facing him and he heard the click of the latch. In that fraction of a second instinct saved him; he darted across the hall and into a dark room just as somebody came out into the hall.

Crouching there in the stuffy blackness, Scurry saw the person pass the door and heard him on the stairs. Had he gone to investigate the noise of the scuttle, or was he bound on some harmless and domestic errand? Every moment the journalist expected to hear a shout of alarm. He fingered his pistol. If worse came to worse, he would stick-up the whole darned bunch and make a break for it. He was tremendously surprised at his own nerve, not recognizing it as the instinctive courage of a rat in a corner. But no alarm was given. After a time the man came back, passing the room which hid Scurry without so much as a glance in its direction, and went into the next room, closing the door behind him.

Much relieved, yet not daring to use his electric torch, Hale started to explore his hiding place. Further along the wall he made a discovery. The hum of voices grew louder, he caught occasional words, and presently, coming abreast of a crack of light, he understood. There was a door between the two rooms which stood ajar.

He could not see all of the adjoining apartment, but fortunately its occupants were in his limited vision—two men who had drawn up chairs to a smoking-table. Both were strangers to him. The nearest sent a stream of cigar smoke under the droplight.

Hardly a pleasant face, thought the journalist, eyeing him with interest. His features were blunt to the point of coarseness, his forehead overhanging, while his small, bloodshot eyes swimming in their pouches of fat held the cunning and cruelty of the eyes of a grizzly.

"Wallace," said the man, clenching his teeth on his cigar, "you don't suppose those fools have gotten balled up with the police?"

"Can't say," returned his companion, who was in evening clothes. He patted some ashes from his Tuxedo. "Some plain-clothes dicks are about as reliable as bootleg whisky."

At first glance he appeared the sort of person one meets coming out of Morgan's, but Scurry's shrewd eyes read further. He was over-dressed; his fingers were long and thin and nervous—the fingers of a musician —or a card-sharp.

"I wouldn't worry over Tiffin, Mr. Stengle," he continued with a laugh. "You of all people ought to appreciate Mrs. Battle's ability to entertain. It's not likely, considering your instructions, she will allow him to be—er—disturbed."

Scurry, crouching in the next room, smothered an exclamation. So the big man was Stengle, manager of Tiffin's store. And of course this was Stengle's house. He remembered now it was located almost behind his own on the next block north. Surely he had entered the lion's den. But who was coming? Why was Tiffin being thus guarded? He felt of his automatic hurriedly, conscious of its cold comfort.

Stengle flushed.

"Are you hinting something nasty about me? I always thought you were a dangerous—friend."

"Hardly. No fear of Tiffin treading on your jealous toes," grinned Wallace. "He is perfectly aware who has the exclusive right to Mrs. Battle's favors. I simply meant she would see he wasn't called to the telephone as long as he's squandering money here. You can count on his sticking close to roulette till after midnight."

The other made an angry gesture.

"I wish you'd stop linking that woman's name with mine. Every man has a right to

an occasional—romance. As far as I'm concerned, this particular one is over. I admit I was going to marry Mrs. Battle."

"Off with the old and on with the new," drawled Wallace. "But take my advice and watch your step; she already suspects there's—somebody else."

"Just what do you mean?"

"I mean that your lady fair is no little innocent from the hay country. She's wise to the news that you're after this Fenton girl to marry her, and unless I miss my guess she'll queer you if she gets half a chance."

"Let her try," grunted Stengle contemptuously. "I'd wring her pretty neck if I thought——"

He was interrupted by the clang of a bell below stairs. Wallace sauntered toward the door, then stopped to fling back mockingly:

"Enter the woman!"

Scurry's blue eyes, wide with surprise, were glued to the crack. Could it be possible he had been tricked? Was the girl he had befriended merely playing him for a sucker?

Presently he heard steps on the stairs and the next moment Joan Fenton came into the room followed by the three detectives whom he had defied earlier in the evening.

Stengle bowed gravely.

"I am sorry," he began, "to bring you here by force, Miss Fenton. A disagreeable duty, you understand."

She looked at him steadily.

"Well?"

He hesitated. Then to the man with the nervous fingers:

"Take these fellows downstairs and give 'em a drink. I want to talk to the girl alone."

Joan turned on the group by the door.

"Don't you dare leave me with him."

"Come, come," soothed Stengle. "You will be perfectly safe. All right, Wallace, get along."

The detectives smiled knowingly; it was not a new situation to them. Sometimes it suited the whims of men like Stengle to befriend women thieves. And so they obediently followed Wallace from the room, closing the door after them.

Joan had retreated a few steps, but now she came forward to the table, her eyes more angry than frightened.

"Did you think by bringing me to your house you would gain anything?"

Stengle smiled unpleasantly.

"You will do well, Miss Fenton, to listen to me. Sit down, please."

"No," she flashed, "and there isn't any need——"

"Oh, yes, there is. There's need for you to be reasonable. Let me go back a little." He dropped into his chair and drew on his cigar, his heavy features triumphant. "A year ago when you both got a job in Tiffin's because Wade was the boss's cousin I tried to be nice to you. The fact that I cared for you should have made you a trifle considerate. But it didn't; you took every opportunity to humiliate me——"

"That's not true," she broke in fiercely, her cheeks crimson. "You made l-love to me, but when I showed an aversion for you you drove me out of Tiffin's; you got poor Wade to invest his savings in worthless mining stock, and, now Wade is gone, you're trying to get square with me. Don't you suppose I know why you had me brought here instead of to a police station? Because if this affair ever reaches Mr. Tiffin he will protect me, and you don't want me protected. You want to do whatever protecting is to be done in your own way. You want me to marry you despite the fact that I absolutely hate you."

"All right," he growled, "let's start from there. Yesterday afternoon you came into the store. When you went out you had a seven-dollar pin which was paid for, and a fifteen-thousand-dollar pendant which was not paid for. I was standing by the cashier's desk when the package came up for wrapping and change.

"Wade had it figured that if he kept the pendant in his pocket, when closing time came we might discover the fake in the tray and have the clerks searched; but if the jewels were safely out of the store nobody could get anything on him. He knew he would have to trust to the cashier's not

looking under the cotton because it's against the rules for a salesman to reopen a package after it's wrapped. Really he should have taken you into his confidence and slipped you the pendant——"

"You know perfectly well I wouldn't have taken the parcel had I known——"

He waved her to silence.

"That's neither here nor there. You did steal a diamond pendant, and therefore you are a criminal in the eyes of the law. It was a clever scheme, my dear, but not clever enough. Now get this through your pretty head; I can send you up the river for several years. As for your brother, he would have been in the same boat except for the accident which bumped him off."

The girl bit her lips to keep them from trembling.

"If you thought I was taking something that didn't belong to me out of the store, why didn't you stop me? Why did you let me get away?"

"Because," he said triumphantly, "I still wanted to be generous to you—to protect you."

"And bringing me here is another act of generosity, I suppose?"

"Certainly, my dear. Now let's get down to business." He folded his arms on the table, his jaw very square. "Give me back the pendant. Nobody need know it was stolen; there are ways. Then—day after tomorrow, perhaps—I shall take a month's vacation. Have you ever been to Palm Beach? An ideal place for a wedding trip."

For a moment it seemed as if her anger would conquer the self-control which she had been maintaining so admirably, but only for a moment.

"Suppose," she said coolly, "I refuse?"

He frowned.

"You will be railroaded up the river, and every newspaper in New York will print a story about you and your precious Wade. Also, I will search you myself before the cops take you away. Get that?"

Scurry, white-hot in the next room, half-raised his automatic, yet something detained him. Possibly Stengle was staging a monumental bluff.

"What do you say?" asked Tiffin's manager. "Is it a go?"

Joan stepped close to him, her eyes narrowing. Suddenly she struck him in the face with her open palm. The power of the blow sent him reeling, his cigar on the floor, his coat covered with ashes, but he got to his feet even as she turned toward the door. His little eyes were starting from their sockets.

"By God, that's cost you——" he began, when Scurry made his appearance with leveled pistol.

"Hold on," he advised the girl. "Do you want to warn the whole darned gang that we've caught this prize skunk?"

"You—here——" she managed.

"Yes," he returned blithely, "still on the jump. Something like a flea on a stove; every time I try a new spot I find it hotter."

He gave his attention abruptly to the man.

"Now, my man, don't make the mistake of yelling for help. I heard the whole business just as clearly as if I'd been an invited guest. It was some scheme, but you didn't reckon on one detail—me."

Stengle stared at him in amazement.

"Who the devil are you?" he exploded.

Scurry struck a pose.

"Me? I'm the righter of wrongs, the Nemesis of criminals, the stern arm of justice. I'm——"

"Put down that gun."

"I'd like to, honestly I would; because, not being used to guns, I'm afraid the blame thing'll go off. But caution forbids."

"Get out the way you came in," snarled Stengle furiously. "If you don't I'll turn you over to the police."

Scurry advanced to within a dozen feet of the other; his lips were smiling, but his eyes were not.

"Hadn't it occurred to you that maybe I might want to do a bit of planning myself?"

Then, turning to Joan:

"Frisk him," he ordered.

She looked puzzled.

"Frisk?"

"Sure. Oh, pardon me, I mean relieve him of any deadly weapon he may have concealed on his person."

Stengle made a gesture. His eyes held a menace not to be ignored.

"If you take one step toward me," he threatened, "I'll——"

"Scream," finished Scurry, chuckling. "But you won't, you know. It isn't done, really it isn't—not when the fellow with the pistol is just aching to shoot. Don't labor under any delusions; the least noise from you and I'll make you look like a sponge. All right, Miss Fenton."

The room was very still as the girl crossed it slowly, her gray eyes determined. As she touched Stengle's hip pocket the journalist saw the veins in his forehead swell.

"Remember the sponge," Scurry advised grimly.

The next moment she drew back, gingerly holding an automatic.

"Now," went on Hale, "sit down at that table. That's better. Take a sheet of your note-paper and write what I tell you to. You won't?"

"I'll see you in purgatory first," growled Tiffin's manager, his face mottled.

Scurry brought his gun to a dead level.

"One, two——"

Stengle picked up his pen.

"Mrs. Battle; Dear Madam," dictated the journalist, "this is to introduce to you Jack Hale, a special friend of mine and of the police commissioner. Show him every courtesy. He wishes to see Mr. Tiffin on private business. You may trust to his discretion. Signed, Clayton Stengle."

After a moment the scratching of the pen ceased and Joan brought the paper to her ally, who read it hastily.

"That'll do," he grinned. "Now we'll put him in storage and move along."

Stengle, his eyes congested, shook his fist over the table.

"I'll see you in stripes for this if it takes every cent I have in the world."

"Remember the sponge," cautioned the little man with the blue eyes. "I'm not so sure it wouldn't be better to blow a hole in you, anyway."

Then, under his directions, Joan ripped down one of the window curtains and tore it into strips, with which she pinioned Stengle's arms to his sides. Whereupon Scurry put away his pistol and finished the job with another curtain. When they had him trussed like a mummy they dragged him to a closet, thrust him in and locked the door.

Hale wiped his forehead.

"Whew," he muttered. "Now for act two. Some show, isn't it?"

The girl agreed faintly; she was rather white as he put her in a chair and perched himself on the table. After lighting a cigarette, he said:

"I'm beginning to think I missed my calling; crime comes to me like second nature."

But there was no answering smile in her eyes.

"Let's hurry," she pleaded. "We must get away somehow."

He looked at her anxiously.

"Sure you can stand the racket?"

"Yes."

"Good. Then listen: I am going downstairs and stick-up the bunch hitting the booze in the dining-room. That's about where they'll be. You slip out the front door and call a taxi; there's a stand a half-block from here. Come back for me and tell the driver to keep his engine running. I'll join you as quickly as I can——"

"But what are you going to do with the detectives?"

He grinned.

"If this house is like most brownstone fronts, it's got a cellar under the basement with a nice heavy door at the top of the stairs. We'll let 'em cool their heels in there for a while. Now, all set?"

She smiled in spite of herself at the calm manner in which he disposed of a half-dozen armed men. Certainly this ally of hers was something of an optimist.

"Yes," she said, striving to match his calmness. "All—set."

CHAPTER FIVE

AT first Scurry had wondered about Stengle's family; then it occurred to him that the manager of Tiffin's was a bachelor. In all probability he took his

meals at a nearby restaurant, thus eliminating the servant problem. Wallace had answered the door, which rather pointed to an absence of menials.

Before the journalist left he turned out the lights and made sure the closet was securely fastened. Then he and Joan crept down the stairs. No one was in the lower hall, but the murmur of voices interspersed with an occasional laugh came from the direction of the dining-room.

"Now," whispered Scurry, "when you hear me stick 'em up you travel."

She nodded. She had never before seen such dependable blue eyes or such a valiant spirit in so small a body.

"Don't take chances, Mr. Hale. If anything should happen to you—*anything*—it would be my fault. I can't bear to think of you in—danger."

Flushing, he whispered back:

"Don't you worry about me; this is my lucky night. You just run along and land a taxi."

The lower hall extended back to the dining-room; to the left was an unlighted parlor, and into this he slipped. From there he could see the party making merry around the sideboard. Also their voices reached him. Wallace was speaking.

"Our gifted cross-examiner must be enjoying himself," he smiled. "If you ask my opinion, he'll never let you take that skirt to the station. He'll more likely take her to Florida himself on a wedding trip."

A hearty laugh greeted this prediction.

"But I'm not so sure she's got the shiners on her," put in a Tiffin detective. "She had a chance to pass 'em while we was after a warrant. But of course, as Mr. Wallace says, Stengle doesn't care a damn for the rocks; what he wants is the girl—and he's got her. I'll lay a bet Stengle goes on a long vacation before the month's out."

Scurry, crouching in the darkened room, could stand no more. He stepped from behind the portieres, his legs spread apart and his pistol leveled.

"Put 'em up," he ordered grimly. "Reach for the ceiling, quick."

Although several of the group were armed, and although a determined and concentrated drawing of weapons would have spelled certain disaster for the journalist, not a man hesitated; five pairs of hands obeyed, five faces were turned in consternation toward the parlor.

After a moment of absolute silence one of the Tiffin men exploded:

"It's the bloke from the other house. What do yer know about that."

"Everything," returned Scurry, his anger fading as the comedy of the situation became apparent. "Don't you dare tell me," he went on, grinning, "that I've got no business here. I'll shoot the man who says that. It seems to be the main cue in this performance. And don't you even hint you'll turn me over to the police. I've been verbally consigned to a cell so many times tonight I'm getting to feel like a regular bum."

"Put down that gun!" bluffed Wallace.

"I knew it!" chuckled the journalist. "That was the other line I forgot. Now, gentlemen, if you've gotten all the stock dialogue off your chests, maybe you will listen to something original. The three of you from Tiffin's step to the front. There, that's right. Draw your pistols, barrels first. Be careful to work slowly; if I see anybody trying a mystic pass they're going to feel like the hole in a cruller."

Muttering, the men from the jewelry store obeyed.

"Drop 'em on the floor," ordered Scurry.

Three thuds followed.

"Splendid!" went on the journalist. "You're next, Wallace. Front stage, please."

"I'll get you for this," snarled the metropolitan gentleman with the slim fingers, "if it takes every cent I own!"

"Stop!" thundered Hale. "You're infringing. That's Stengle's copyright. I despise plagiarism."

"What are you dragging me into this for? I haven't got a gun; I'm no dick."

"No, but you are chief cook and bottle-washer for number three-ninety-seven West Fifty —— street. 'Gentleman Wallace,' they call you at Headquarters. If you don't come across I'll bump it out of your pocket with a bullet."

Another thud on the floor.

"Now," continued Scurry, "we're going somewhere together. Lead on, Wallace, and walk slow."

Never did trained soldiers obey more quickly. There was something in the little man's eye which took the fight out of them. Waving his gun toward the swinging door into the pantry, he shooed them on. Silently they filed through, down the back stairs, across basement and kitchen, and straight for a steel door. Beyond that a flight of stairs disappeared into blackness.

Wallace hesitated.

"You can't put us in there," he argued. "We'll suffocate."

"Oh, no," returned Scurry blandly. "The air won't be good, but there's plenty of it. March."

For a moment after he swung the steel door closed and bolted it he heard the creaking of the stairs under the weight of the men; then silence settled over the building. Three stories above, Stengle was safe in a closet, while below, the remainder of the gang who threatened Joan's happiness enjoyed the discomforts of a makeshift, yet admirable, prison.

Scurry took one precaution before leaving the house; returning to the first floor, he cut the telephone wires in the library. Then he put out the lights, opened the front door and stepped into the street.

His watch told him it was just twelve o'clock. Snow still fell steadily. To right and left stretched the twin rows of gaslights, the tops of the posts visored in snow, the flames beneath peering forth like so many unwinking eyes. Again he was conscious of that uncanny hush—as if the city were listening. Then came the sudden and familiar chug-chug of a taxi. Like an unsteady boat it careened out of the storm, swung in a wide arc and drew up before the house.

As he climbed in he saw Joan's face, a white blur against the dark interior.

"What happened?" she begged.

He told her briefly, but, as the machine started, broke off to instruct the chauffeur.

"Three Ninety-seven West Fifty —— street," he shouted through the window, "and an extra dollar if you make it in five minutes."

With the reckless assurance of all taxi drivers, the man at the wheel set out to earn his money. The cab swayed and lunged over the frozen surface of the pavement; the falling snow shut them in like a fog at sea, while dimly through the storm one could make out lights swimming by.

The girl clung to Scurry's arm after being nearly tossed to the floor, and he was forced to brace his feet to steady her and himself. However Joan had come into possession of the Tiffin gems, she deserved only praise for her courage—of that much he felt certain. Also he got an age-old thrill for her nearness. The manager of Metropolitan destinies had sent her to him out of the snowstorm and the night, a slim, gray-eyed woman fighting big odds, and Scurry had championed her cause with all his heart. That he cared for her, that he wanted to go on protecting her indefinitely he now knew. Love comes like that occasionally.

He looked at her tenderly. Her head was very near his shoulder. Something in her attitude—perhaps her weariness which she could no longer hide—made him put his arm about her and draw her close. He rather expected her to resent this, but she did not, and her sigh was contented. After a moment she said, in a somewhat smothered voice:

"You really have no right to—to comfort me—like—this—— Ouch! you are pinching me, Mr. Hale."

He started violently.

"Good Lord, was I? I meant it for myself. You see, I wanted to be sure——"

"And if you wouldn't hold me so tight. There's something hard under your coat."

He turned brick red, which phenomenon was lost on her owing to the darkness.

"That's my watch. Perhaps you would be more comfortable if you put your head a little higher."

"I didn't select this place for my head, Mr. Hale. If you remember, you selected it. I think I shall sit up."

"No you won't," he growled. "The cab is bouncing terribly; you might get hurt."

They rode in silence for a while. Then, of a sudden, Scurry bent his lips to hers and kissed her.

"I love you," he said. "I've loved you ever since you came into my rooms. Will you m-marry me, Joan?"

She pushed him away.

"I shouldn't have let you—make me comfortable." Her voice was stern.

"Will you marry me?" he repeated, holding fast to her hands determinedly. "You've got to, you know. It fits into the plot——"

"The plot?"

"Yes; that's where the reader gets the kick. And we *must* have a kick."

"Are you crazy, Mr. Hale?"

"Sure," he grinned, "about you, dear. Don't you see it was all arranged. You were sent to me. We can't afford to offend Destiny, can we?"

He kissed her again, and this time she clung to him.

"And as soon as I get you clear of this mess we will be married. It's the most glorious, wonderful fact in the world. You're going to marry Scurry Hale—me, the fellow who thought life was just one Subway ride after another."

She sighed.

"For a blue-eyed man you are very persistent, but you can't make me promise—yet."

"Yes, I can, dearest. I shall keep on kissing you until you do."

And after a while—quite a while—she promised.

CHAPTER SIX

WITH a breath-taking skid the taxi did a shimmy from curb to curb, vaulted a snowpile left in the gutter by the white-wings, and came to a throbbing halt in front of number three-ninety-seven. Not a light showed in the brownstone front; nor was there anything in its appearance to cause remark.

"Wait," Scurry told the chauffeur. Then helping Joan out of the cab, he guided her up the slippery steps. Presently they were admitted by a negro in a white coat. That he was not prepossessed with their appearance was evident. Joan felt stifled, so great was the transition from the biting air outside to the steam-heated foyer, but in spite of her fatigue and her anxiety she had to smile when Hale, his sweater and old trousers covered with dirt accumulated on his trip across Stengle's roof, fixed his blue eyes haughtily on the doorman.

"Tell Mr. Tiffin to come down here immediately," he ordered.

"Mr. Tiffin?" The negro's brow was raised in an exaggerated manner. "This, suh, am the residence of Mrs. DeWitt Battle; I reckons you has uncalculated the number, suh."

"No, I haven't 'uncalculated' anything. Mr. Tiffin is here and I want to see him—at once."

The shiny face assumed a grieved expression.

"Sorry, suh, but I'se expressed mase'f as you heard."

"Yes," said Scurry sharply, "but how about this?" And he held out Stengle's note.

"That's different, suh," grinned the doorman. "You an' the lady step in hyeh. But you'll have to see the Missus fust."

He ushered them into a white-and-gold reception-room and disappeared. A few minutes later a woman entered. As they looked at her curiously they felt there must be a mistake. This person was quite evidently a gentlewoman. Everything, from her well-poised head to her dainty satin slippers, spelled patrician. She wore a low-cut black evening-gown, and against the whiteness of her bosom flashed a diamond pendant. Scurry's self-assurance fled; he had expected to face a gaudy type, and instead he found himself confronted by a *grand dame*.

"You wished to see me?" she asked, evidently puzzled.

Scurry bowed.

"Mrs. Battle, I believe. We have come to you from Clayton Stengle." He thought he caught an eager expression penetrating her formality, but if so it fled abruptly.

"Perhaps this note will explain matters," he went on.

She read the letter. Then she re-read it, this time slowly. Presently she said calmly:

"Of course I understand. Did you make him write it at the point of a pistol, or is it just a forgery?"

Hale started.

"How the devil——" he gasped and stopped, aware of his indiscretion.

She smiled.

"It is perfectly simple; I am an intimate friend of Mr. Stengle's. He would hardly open his communication with 'My Dear Madam,' or close it with his full name."

For a moment the journalist looked at her blankly; then he answered her smile with a grin.

"You win," he said. "As an impostor I'm a howling failure."

"Suppose, then, you drop the rôle." Her tone suggested a command.

He considered a minute, wondering if he could force his way to the rooms above. And Mrs. Battle must have guessed his thoughts.

"You can't," she said. "There are three locked door between you and Mr. Tiffin. You would never get past the first. Now which shall it be, the truth or the street?"

Scurry and Joan exchanged glances.

"The truth," said the journalist after a pause, "is quite a yarn; in fact, I'm inclined to think you wouldn't believe it. But the thing we're here for is nothing to you. This lady is the victim of a blackmail plot. She has been accused of stealing jewels from Tiffin's."

Mrs. Battle shrugged.

"Then why appeal to me?"

"Because presumably you don't want to see an innocent person suffer. All we are asking of you is to let us speak to Tiffin. This is his cousin——"

"Not Joan Fenton!"

"Yes," said Scurry, watching her keenly. "I beg your pardon; Mrs. Battle, Miss Fenton."

Suddenly the older woman advanced, her hands clenched at her sides, her body rigid. Her eyes were fixed on the girl.

"What are you doing here? I know all about you. Get out of my house."

"Hold on!" snapped Scurry. "You'll have to explain that."

She laughed mockingly.

"So she's been putting her hooks into you, too. Barnum was right; there's a sucker born every minute and most of them are men."

"What do you mean?" Joan gasped. "You don't think I'm—I'm anything to Clayton Stengle?"

"Why shouldn't I think it? What do you take me for?"

"I'm sorry," said the girl under her breath, "terribly sorry."

Mrs. Battle stared.

"*You* are sorry?"

"Yes. You see, Mr. Hale and I are—engaged. I suppose you heard Mr. Stengle had paid me attention. That was true enough—but he's the only person in the world I thoroughly despise. I am sorry you care for him."

"You lie. You've cooked up this story."

"Stop and think," said Joan without anger. "If he was even a—a friend of mine do you suppose I'd be here now trying to get my cousin to protect me from him? Oh, it's so plain. He has proof I stole a diamond pendant—which I didn't—and he is using that proof to blackmail me."

"How?" Mrs. Battle took her by the shoulders. "I want the truth."

"It—it isn't a nice thing for a girl to have to tell——"

"You must. Can't you guess what it means—to me?" This in almost a whisper. "If you're on the level——"

"Believe me, I *am* on the level, Mrs. Battle."

"Then tell me, what did Clayton Stengle want of you?"

Joan looked at Scurry. He nodded slightly. She flushed, dropped her eyes.

"He wanted me to marry him and go to Palm Beach with him."

Mrs. Battle was face to face with a crisis, the shadow of which had threatened her for years. She had woven her dreams around Stengle as women will around the men they love, finding a measure of hap-

piness in her pitiful pretense, and refusing to look into the future. Now it was over—merely a passing romance to Stengle, but to her—the end.

She sank limply on the couch.

"No," she insisted mechanically, "he wanted money. You can't make me believe——"

But Mrs. Battle did believe; and Joan, watching her, knew it intuitively. With a certain diffidence the girl sat down beside her and took her hands.

"I'm sorry," said she, "to hurt you like this, but you had better understand. You would learn some time."

For an instant they searched each other's eyes, and Scurry, standing by awkwardly, felt that Joan was no longer thinking of herself. Her heart had gone out to this woman of another world. It was the old, old tragedy; he read it in Mrs. Battle's hopeless face. With a delicacy he hardly understood he turned away. When next he looked the capper for the gambling-house was standing by the door. She had regained something of her poise, yet even in the subdued light she appeared old, haggard.

"I will send Mr. Tiffin down," she said quietly.

After she had gone Scurry turned to Joan.

"Gosh! that was fine of you, dear—to sympathize with her. Stengle must be a worse rotter than we thought."

"There ought to be a law to hang such men," returned the girl.

He nodded.

"But I have an idea she will square accounts. It is, according to the psychologists, a very short jump from love to hate."

Mr. Wadsworth Tiffin was a bland, smooth-shaven bachelor of evident geniality. His hobby was roulette and his income equal to the strain. He came in smoking a cigar and looking a bit surprised. His surprise turned to concern as he recognized Miss Fenton.

"You here," he murmured. "My dear Joan, is this—er—exactly wise?"

"Wade was run over and killed yesterday by an automobile," she gasped. "I've been trying everywhere to get hold of you."

"Not killed?"

"Yes." She choked back her tears bravely. "The police say he didn't look where he was going. Poor boy, they took him to a hospital, but it was no use." She hesitated, fighting for the self-control to go on. "Yesterday afternoon Wade called me up and asked me to stop at your store. When I did so he gave me a little box, and told me it was a birthday present, but not to open it until he got home. Almost immediately after the accident Mr. Stengle accused me over the telephone of helping Wade steal a—a diamond pendant. He urged me to bring the pendant to him at once, and if I—I agreed to marry him he'd see I wasn't prosecuted.

"Of course I said I didn't know anything about it, but as soon as I hung up I unwrapped the box Wade had given me. A pretty gold pin was in it—that was apparently all. By accident I happened to take out the cotton underneath." Her eyes went to the floor. "I don't believe, Mr. Tiffin, Wade intended to steal it; he was in financial trouble; he would have returned it as soon as he had thought things over.

"I understood Mr. Stengle's threat then; but I felt if I could reach you you would protect me. I telephoned. They told me you were away. All day I've been trying to communicate with you, but a man—a detective, I suppose—followed me everywhere I went. This evening I sneaked out the back door and started to come here. As I was passing through Forty-eighth street I noticed three men hurrying to catch up with me. Too scared to realize the chances I was taking, I turned into the nearest house. This gentleman hid me and fooled the detectives. With his help we've managed to bring the pendant here. Please, Mr. Hale, give it to him."

Scurry drew the package from his pocket and passed it to Tiffin.

"Now," went on the girl, bracing herself for the most odious part of the story, "your manager——"

She got no further; there came a sudden tramping of feet in the foyer, the door was swung violently open and several men pushed into the room.

"Stand perfectly still, Hale," snapped Stengle. "And you, too, Joan Fenton. Evening, Mr. Tiffin. I see we're in time."

Behind Stengle were the three Tiffin detectives, the Wallace person and two uniformed policemen. Scurry stepped to Joan's side. So the gang had broken loose, but what had they come here for? What could they hope to gain by confronting Tiffin? He felt rather secure in the knowledge that the gems had already been returned.

"You're wrong about being in time," he grinned.

Stengle eyed him menacingly.

"That so?" he drawled. "I think not. Mr. Tiffin, this woman is a jewel thief and this man her accomplice. They are wanted by the police."

Tiffin made an angry gesture.

"Hold on, sir. I seldom interfere in matters pertaining to the store, but you will have to withdraw that statement; Miss Fenton happens to be a relative of mine."

The manager laughed.

"So they have duped you, too?"

"No; they have returned a pendant stolen yesterday by a salesman. I am indebted to both Miss Fenton and Mr. Hale."

Stengle pointed to the little packet still in Tiffin's hand.

"Better look it over," he advised. "It's lucky I'm not so easily tricked."

The other shook his head.

"I will accept Miss Fenton's word. This is the pendant in question, isn't it, Joan?"

The girl nodded.

"Certainly; but examine it by all means."

"Yes," put in Scurry, "we want no nasty questions floating around."

Tiffin shrugged and began unwrapping the tissue paper.

"Unless I am much mistaken," went on his manager, "you will find a paste imitation there. You are too easy, Mr. Tiffin."

As the diamonds were revealed Stengle and Wallace exchanged glances. The party crowded close. Tiffin, taking a small magnifying-glass from his pocket, adjusted it. The next instant he raised his eyes to the girl, a strangely hurt expression in them. "I'm sorry," he said simply. "Why did you do this?"

In the silence Joan put her hand to her throat.

"Do what?" she managed.

Tiffin shook his head.

"There's no use denying it. I could have forgiven the theft—but putting the blame on your brother. How could you?"

"I don't understand." She was trembling, her eyes wide.

"As Stengle says," went on Tiffin, in the same lifeless voice, "the pendant is a fake. I don't think it is paste, but the stones are white sapphires—instead of diamonds. You would hardly hope to fool me."

His mind a tumult, Scurry led Joan to the divan where she crumpled up. He read the question in her face, in the piteous droop of her mouth.

"It's another trick," he whispered. "Keep up your courage. Remember I love you." This very low.

Stengle stepped forward.

"I've always tried to protect your interests, Mr. Tiffin," he said unctuously. "No matter how—er—painful, the law must take its course. Later I will interview Miss Fenton and perhaps"—here he turned a mocking eye on the girl—"perhaps I can save her the disgrace of prison." He nodded to the policemen. "You have a couple of warrants; serve 'em."

Tiffin mopped his forehead.

"You can't do it," he said at last. "You can't take a relative of mine to jail."

"I beg your pardon," fenced his manager smoothly, "so you wish to protect persons engaged in crime? It wouldn't look well for Tiffin's—a newspaper story to that effect."

The other shook his head.

"There is no need of publicity, is there? We must settle this matter here—somehow."

"Do I understand you withdraw all charges?"

"Yes—under the circumstances."

"Very well." And Stengle's tone was

triumphant. "I will not. I am under contract to protect and further your business interests, and I propose to do so. Officers, serve those warrants."

Joan gave a little cry and hid her face; and Scurry, bending over her with his heart in his eyes, could think of no word of comfort. A policeman touched him on the arm.

"Come on, young feller. Be reasonable or I'll have ter put the bracelets on yer."

The other patrolman raised the girl's unresisting body.

As he was hustled toward the door Scurry realized the end had come. Gone was his job, his reputation, and, what was still more terrible, the woman he loved faced prison or worse. He gritted his teeth; some day he would be free to hunt down Stengle and——

Joan was holding out her arms to him. He shook off his guard and drew her close.

"Don't give up," he managed. "I have friends—they will do something——"

"Better hurry 'em along," prompted Stengle maliciously. "It will be daylight directly."

Scurry straightened.

"You'll get yours, Stengle," he said hotly. "Take that to bed with you."

As they neared the door it was suddenly flung open. Mrs. Battle stood on the threshold. There was something of the tiger in her poise. She was very beautiful standing there blocking the path of the policemen—and rather terrible. Her head was thrown back, her arms outspread.

"Wait," she commanded. And then she began to speak over the heads of the men straight at Stengle. "You fool, had you forgotten me? Did you think I would stand by and see you drag that innocent girl into a prison cell?"

"Hold on," he begged, "I'll make it right with you——"

Her laugh was as thin-edged as a knife blade.

"You'll make it right with me? Yes, but in *my* way. You did for me when you won my love and cast me off for her." She pointed to Joan. "Now I'll do for you."

With a quick motion she snatched at her bosom and, as she opened her hand, something glistened in the palm.

"Mr. Tiffin," she panted, "there is your stolen pendant. And there"—again her finger shot out, but this time it was Stengle she indicated—"and there is your thief. He's been doing it for months—watering your stock with imitations. He gave me this, and boasted about where it came from. He trusted me, and then—then he dared to double-cross me. He wanted this girl—your own cousin."

"Stop," screamed Tiffin's manager, his face positively green with guilt. "You're crazy. Stop her, officer."

But nobody moved. Mrs. Battle continued:

"Wade Fenton, driven to desperation by his losses in mining stock, evidently did steal what he thought was a diamond pendant. He took for granted it was real, because it was in a tray in the store. And Joan Fenton and this man, Hale, returned it to you—just as they said. It was a fake long before it ever left Tiffin's. I listened at the door just now. I'm not sure this pendant is the exact duplicate of the one you have there, but I suspect so. If not, you will find its duplicate in stock."

Stengle edged out of the group. A patrolman caught his arm.

"Hold on," he muttered, "I reckon we've made a mistake."

Tiffin was already comparing the stones, his face a study.

"Yes," he said, "they are alike, except one is made of white sapphires and the other—the one Mrs. Battle gave me—is real."

"Now," went on the woman in the door, "you can take him away. I'll be on hand at his trial, never fear. Afterwards, when he's in stripes——" She laughed again, that thin, nerve-shattering laugh. "But there isn't any afterwards for me."

The door slammed and she was gone.

"Come on," snarled the officer who held Stengle. "You're goin' fer a ride in th' wagon. It ain't none o' my business, but there ought to be a law in this State to swing a bird like you."

CHAPTER SEVEN

HALF an hour later Hale stood beside his table looking down at Algeria, his cat, who, roused by his entrance, gazed at him with yellow, unblinking eyes. Outside the snow still patted the window-panes. His fire had burned away to a bed of coals.

The clock on the mantel told him it was ten minutes after four.

"Algeria," he remarked jovially, "at last I've had a real adventure. You see a new man—I'll bet I can put enough kick into my stories in future to thrill all the editors in New York. But the real facts of my adventure I can't write, and nobody'd believe them."

POLICE RADIO SERVICE

DISCUSSING some of the uses to which the Police Department could put radio, Commissioner Enright recently said: "The criminals today travel very quickly. Formerly they traveled on foot and in the street cars, but today they use high-power automobiles. In order to cope with the situation we must always be one step ahead of them. Speed is essential to the prevention and elimination of crime. The speed with which information to police in other cities could be broadcast would make it almost impossible for criminals to escape.

"While the telephone has proved invaluable in disseminating information about criminals and robberies, it has disadvantages which could be eliminated by radio. My plan would be to place the radio in about fifty strategic positions throughout the city—at the ferries, the bridges and the points leading from the city. In this way, when a crime was committed, word could be broadcast immediately to these stations and sufficient information given to the police at all the points of escape to enable them to apprehend the criminals.

"After this I would equip the various stations with sets and possibly install sets on the different 'beats,' so that patrolmen could keep in touch with headquarters as they now do by telephone.

"We could radio certain information to people who are leaving the city on vacations. Invariably when people go away they draw their blinds and board up their doorways, telling the criminals in very plain language that they are going away and probably will not be back for some time. Instructions as to what to do when going away could be sent out, and we could also warn these people to forward their new addresses to Police Headquarters or to leave the names and addresses of people with us through whom they could be reached.

"During a snowstorm word could also be broadcast that if the walks in front of houses were not cleared summons would be issued."

When asked if the Police Department would use the new municipal station, Commissioner Enright said, "If it can be arranged and if our needs warrant it.

"We have experimented with radio on patrol wagons," continued Commissioner Enright, "but up to the present use in this respect has not proved feasible. We are watching closely all developments of radio as they pertain to use by the police, and as soon as we find that they are suitable to our needs we shall put them into effect."

The present plant operated by the New York Police Department is the property of the Western Electric Company. It is located in Police Headquarters and has the call letters WLAW. It operates on a 400-meter wave length and has a radius of several hundred miles.

What Handwriting Reveals

CONDUCTED BY LOUISE RICE

The article "What Does Your Handwriting Tell You," which appeared in our last issue, brought us such a flock of inquiries and requests for service on graphology that we have decided to start such a department, conducted by Miss Rice. She is well known for her character delineations based on deductions from specimens of handwriting. We wish to make this a helpful department for our readers. Send us specimens of your handwriting, Miss Rice will analyze them, and the reading will be published in a future number of this magazine. Only a limited number of answers can be published at a time in each issue owing to lack of space. If you desire an early reply and personal letter from Miss Rice, cut out the coupon on page 63 and send it to us, enclosing 10 cents and a stamped envelope to cover the cost of stationery, handling, etc., and Miss Rice will promptly send you a personal reading. The following are answers to a number of our readers who have written to Miss Rice. —THE EDITOR.

S. S. SYNTAX.—No, I don't believe that there is "a fate which we cannot evade." I think that we make our own fates; pretty bad ones, too, sometimes, and I am afraid that yours is going to be one of the bad kind. I say this, not because I have the slightest idea of what your future is going to be, but because your will power is shown in your handwriting to be so very, very weak. Now, the will power is the motive power of human life. Cease to fight and strive and struggle and life will do all sorts of unpleasant things to you. Therefore, the most important thing that I, as a character reader, could say to you, is that you need development of the will power and that unless you get that development you are likely to continue in your present fatalistic state of mind.

JUST MARY.—Your handwriting expresses so much that is fine and interesting in character that I hate to be as severe with you as I ought to be, for your own good, for the truth is that you are one of the people who carry unselfishness to unreasonable lengths. In giving, try to remember that it is a bad thing for any one to receive too much service and attention. I think that it is this very element in your nature (so beautiful in itself) that is at the bottom of your unhappiness with your sweetheart. Men, alas, are apt to value more highly that which they must pay for than that which is handed to them on a silver platter. You get the idea, don't you? Don't allow that spoiled boy to take you quite so much for granted; show him that you are displeased when he is careless of your comfort and indifferent to your expressed wishes, and I believe that you will be doing the best for him, as well as for yourself.

F. L. F., MARTINSVILLE.—There is much that is fine in this specimen of your father's, and much, also, which shows the narrow-mindedness of which you complain. Frankly, I don't think that you can influence a stern old character like that, nor do I see how an impetuous young person like you can live in peace with it. As a rule, I try to use what influence I may have to keep young people in their homes, but there are exceptions, and this is one of them. You have talent for salesmanship, but you will have to overcome that tactlessness which is so pronounced an element in your character, if you want to really make good use of those talents.

SISTER LUCY.—The specimen numbered 1 shows a person who is fickle, bad tempered and conceited. If that's not an alarming combination I never saw one. Number 2 has good qualities and is kind, but has a sort of spineless attitude toward the world

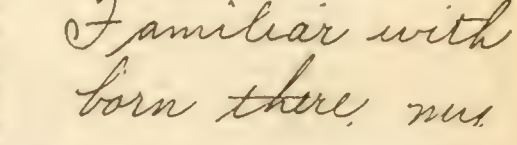
that is not promising for any kind of success. An ambitious girl like you would not be long contented with such a husband. No. 3 is good-tempered and ambitious, but is fickle. It looks to me as if you had picked a bad crop in the garden of love. Your character is such a positive one that I am surprised at your choice of young men friends. Try to really use that good judgment which you have.

X. X. X., NEW YORK.—For a wonder, I can agree that you really do possess literary talent. You may congratulate yourself, as you will understand when I tell you that not one person in five hundred who has the literary itch to "write" ever justifies that by the talent to do it. However, there is no cause for excitement. If you work real hard you may be making your living writing stories in—oh, say—ten years or so. Better keep right on with that pleasant job that you have and work at writing just when you can. You are so young that you would have to mature, anyway, before you could write well.

HARRY K.—I would not be inclined to rate the writer of the specimen which you enclose as a good business partner for you. He is a good deal shrewder than you, but of course that would do no harm if he were entirely honest. The trouble is that he is not, and that he is extremely selfish and "cold-blooded," as the expression is. You are warm-hearted and unsuspecting. The result of such a partnership would be that your money and his experience would change hands. Your "i" dots show me that you are very imaginative and intuitive. Are you sure that you want to go into the clothing business? It seems to me that those qualities would be used to better effect in work which was less prosaic. Why not deal in objects of art, in laces or fine fabrics? Such work would bring you into contact with interesting things and with a more interesting type of customer (to one of your temperament) than the clothing business would.

CALLAHAN & COMPANY.—Yes, indeed, handwriting does tell "the traits which an employer should know about" concerning employees. Let me suggest that you take that cross and irritable and unfriendly fellow that you have in your sales department right out of there. Put him in the accounting department. There his exactness and good memory and carefulness over detail will be worth a great deal, but they are not worth as much in the salesroom, where the irritability which accompanies them is a decided detriment to your business. The man who is now salesman number three should be called in from "the road" and given charge of the sales force. He will make good, as he has executive ability and a winning personality. He will make far more money for you behind a desk, guiding and inspiring other salesmen, than he ever will selling, himself. Just try out these recommendations, which are given through the information supplied by the specimens you enclosed, and you will soon see, I think, that graphology is a most reliable science.

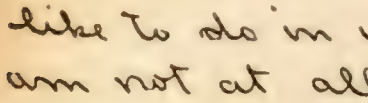
DORA F.—Your handwriting shows very plainly that you are a person who seldom falters when resolved to accomplish anything. You have a very strong will, and are kind-hearted, but never let sympathy interfere with duty. It is fair to assume you are quite young, but a very capable girl.



Your temperament is decidedly cool, and you are most emphatically your own mistress, distinctly of the type that never make fatal mistakes. Your chirography shows a love for all that is beautiful in life and nature. You would make a good critic. A girl of your dominant type is usually a natural born leader.

C. C. C.—The speciman of writing you submitted was evidently written by a well-balanced woman, about twenty-five years of age. You are something of a poser—that

is, you like to appear in the limelight and covet the attention of people. And yet you are secretly very emotional. One of your greatest difficulties is to conceal your ambitions. In addition, the writing betrays an



exceedingly romantic disposition. You are probably quite a reader of fiction, a frequenter of theatres, and love to review and live over, mentally, the scenes that appealed to you strongest—to imagine yourself the heroine of the story or play. As most emotional people are highly imaginative, you doubtless derive great pleasure from your day dreams.

EDLON J.—The career of a detective is, as you say, very interesting, Edlon, and it is a most worthy one, in that it is concerned with the protection of human society. I am not willing, however, to say whether or not you would be successful as a detective, for the simple reason that this is not a natural specimen of your handwriting that you send me. You have all but printed your letters, and you have used ruled paper, and I am sure that these very complicated capitals are not in your usual style. You see? It is just as if you had put on false hair and blue spectacles and grown a beard, and then asked me to give a true description of you. Write me again on unruled paper, and write just the way that you always do. Pretty writing is no evidence of a fine character. On the contrary, writing which is very individual and very hard to read may mean a most interesting mind and character. Anyway, be natural. It is the only way that I can judge you correctly.

A BANDIT DE LUXE

A WELL-DRESSED, business-like bandit robbed Ignatz Engel's Sons, Inc., steamship ticket agency, of more than $4,000 after forcing the proprietor and his clerk into the cellar at the point of a pistol. He escaped quickly from the place, which is at West 125th street, New York City.

Alexander Engel and his clerk, Jacob Simpson, were checking up the day's business behind the partition which divides the long, narrow room the company occupies on the first floor. A man, whom Engel described as well groomed, of stocky build and about thirty-five years old, entered and asked how much he could get for a $50 Liberty bond.

Engel told him he would give him $48.50, and the man replied that the price was satisfactory. Reassured by his appearance the broker did not ask to see the bond, but leaned over the cash drawer to get the money. When he looked up he found himself staring directly into the muzzle of an automatic pistol

"Just put up your hands, will you?" the bandit commanded affably. "You, too," he said, cutting an eye around at Simpson, who had been working on a typewriter a few feet away from his employer. Both obeyed.

He then proceeded to "frisk" his two victims in an efficient manner, relieving the clerk of a revolver which he had kept in his hip pocket for just such an emergency.

Driving the two before him, he went to the back of the store where a trap-door leads to the cellar. Simpson was forced to open it and he and Engel ordered down, after which the robber slipped the bolt.

The prisoners immediately ran to the front of the basement and began shouting for help through a grating, but the robber had time to go back to the cash drawer and remove $200 in Liberty bonds, $300 in English gold and $3,548.50 in cash. He snubbed a large quantity of German marks that were also in the drawer.

Pedestrians heard the cries of Engel and his clerk and released them.

Solitaire Downes Passes Out

By EDGAR DANIEL KRAMER

SOLITAIRE DOWNES grunted, yawned and stretched his unusually long legs. It was very evident that the unceasing chatter of his train acquaintance was getting on his nerves. He looked bored and a frown furrowed his forehead.

"There's absolutely nothing to hold me," Trowbridge Mills was saying enthusiastically. "I have no ties, no family at all. I am one lone bird. I come when I please and I go in the same sweet careless way. I am the original Mr. A. Rolling Stone, and that is no mistake. My address is Anywhere. See?"

Solitaire nodded, lit another cigarette and settled more comfortably into his seat.

"You see," Mills continued, "I hanker after new folks and new places. It's in my blood, I guess. Wanderlusting is my weakness. I am on my way to 'Frisco now, and my plans include a jump over to the South Seas. I have been reading about that corner of the world until I am plumb dizzy. I want to give them the once-over myself. I want to see at first hand whether Gauguin and O'Brien and London and the rest of the ink-slingers have been giving us the right dope, or whether they have been snickering up their sleeves all the time, while we have been swallowing what they ladled out to us in their books. I am on my way to get the real of things." He paused long enough to fumble through his pockets and bring a sheaf of much-thumbed letters to light. "Here's a lot of junk that has come to me about those islands," he resumed—"inside stuff on what boats to take, sailing dates and all kind of truck. You can have them. Look them over when you get the time. They're interesting."

He tossed the letters into Solitaire's lap. The latter gathered them up and thrust them into the side pocket of his coat.

"This South Sea business has had me going from the very beginning," Mills explained. "Now——"

"If you will pardon me," Solitaire interrupted, "I reckon I'll go and wash up a bit and loosen these props of mine. Quarters are pretty cramped in these cars, and I'm getting all kinked up."

Suiting the action to the word, he rose, lifted his suitcase from under the seat and started down the aisle.

"Hey!" Mills jumped to his feet to call after him, holding another suitcase in his hand. "Hey, pard. That's my bag you have there."

Solitaire stopped and glanced back over his shoulder.

"You have my suitcase," Mills repeated. "This one's yours, I guess."

"My mistake," Solitaire smiled as a startled look died in his eyes. "Funny, too."

He swung around abruptly and started to hurry down the aisle.

"Mix-ups will happen," Mills laughed jocularly as Solitaire drew near. "Causes trouble sometimes. I remember once in New Orleans——"

Then there came a terrific crash. Solitaire was stopped dead in his tracks and flung backward as though by a mighty invisible hand. The lights flickered, came on again and then went out. Wild shrieks of terror and of infinite anguish cut through the night. Suddenly a great wave seemed to engulf Solitaire in the black waters of oblivion.

The man upon the hospital cot stirred slightly, opened his eyes very slowly and

blinked around at the immaculate white walls of the room. A nurse bent over him.

"What happened?" he asked in a voice that seemed strangely weak and far-away to him.

"You must not talk," the nurse cautioned, laying her cool fingers upon his fevered lips. "Doctor's orders."

"What happened?" he queried again. "Where am I and how long have I been here?"

"Surely, that's one fine lot of questions for a sick man to ask," an interne laughed, settling into a chair by the bed and taking his pulse. "Easy, easy. Save your strength."

"I want to know," the invalid insisted.

"Of course you do," the interne humored him. "But hold your horses. There's no rush, you know. It's taken five weeks for you to make up your mind to come around to this, and——"

"I've been here five weeks?"

"You have, Mr. Mills," the interne assured him.

"Five weeks?" the patient echoed, a puzzled expression on his face. "Tell me all about it."

"You see," the interne explained, "the train you were on was ditched just three miles south of here. You're in Wellsburg, you know. A parted rail sent the whole shebang gallywest into a hideous tangle of twisted steel. You were pretty well smashed up, Mr. Mills, and although you're coming around as fit as a fiddle, I doubt if your own mother would know you now. You were mighty lucky at that, though, for every one in the smoking-car was killed with the exception of yourself. A miracle, almost. You were in a bad way when you came to us here, and you have had a mighty narrow squeak. You have put up a dandy fight and have pulled through splendidly. You have become our star patient, and the whole town has been following your case with more interest than it displayed in the last World's Series. You have become a celebrity here, Mr. Mills."

"Everybody else croaked in the smoker, eh?" Mills asked.

"Every last one of them," the interne replied, "and among the dead was a notorious bank-burglar, the best in that game, I understand. His name has got away from me, it seems."

"Was it Downes, Solitaire Downes?"

"That's the bird," the interne ejaculated. "He was smashed to a pulp. He was identified by the suitcase he was clutching. It was jammed with bundles of banknotes from three banks recently looted back East and a cracksman's kit that Police Chief Cleary says is the finest he has ever laid his eyes on. It must be a crackerjack. Cleary's got the outfit down at his office now. According to the papers, that Solitaire chap had been very recently pardoned from an Eastern pen. Without a doubt he didn't lose any time getting back on the job. Cleary says the police all over the country will breathe easier now that Solitaire's gone, because he was usually just two jumps ahead of them, laughing and twiddling his thumbs at them as he went."

"Clever, eh?"

"He couldn't even be approached in his own particular line, I take it," the interne answered.

"Thanks a lot for wising me up," the invalid smiled. "I feel better now, lots better," and turning to the wall, he closed his eyes.

"This thriving little city of Wellsburg has a heart, sir," Horace Greeley Tibbetts, the white-haired editor of the Wellsburg *Times*, was saying that afternoon. "Man, woman and child, we have been following your case with rapt interest, Mr. Mills. We have been watching your progress from day to day, and we have been praying for your recovery, sir. You have been a fighter, and there is not a man in this town who does not take his hat off to you for the sand you have displayed in your struggle with the Grim Reaper, sir. I am here to congratulate you, Mr. Mills, and to express the hope that you will be fully yourself again and about in the very near future. Wellsburg has a heart, sir—a heart to understand and to appreciate."

Mills could only stare in dumbfounded wonder, vainly groping for words to say.

"I do not wish to tire you." The old ed-

itor rose and bowed from the hips in the grand manner. "I will bid you good afternoon."

At the door he paused with his hand on the knob.

"I hope you will pardon me, Mr. Mills," he smiled, and his eyes were dancing, "but am I correctly informed that your profession is the law?"

"I have dabbled with the law," Mills answered with a chuckle, "but my line is banking."

"Banking!" Horace Greeley Tibbetts exclaimed. "A very splendid calling, young man."

Then he was gone.

"I wonder what was tickling the old duffer so much," Mills pondered. "He surely was mightily pleased with himself."

When Mills was finally discharged from the hospital he found a clerkship in the Wellsburg National Bank awaiting him.

"You told me that your profession was banking," Horace Greeley Tibbetts explained, oozing satisfaction the while. "My friend, George Washington Duncan, President of the Wellsburg National, chanced to tell me that he was in need of a good man. I thought of you, and mentioned your name. He jumped at it like a trout after a fly, and promised to hold the place open for you. So there you are!" The old fellow paused momentarily, and then plunged on: "I thought you might like a position here for a while." He hesitated. "Funds might be low," he blurted out. "It's splendid to see you out, whether you go into the bank or not. Duncan has been holding the place for you."

Rather than dim the old gentleman's satisfaction, which was so evident, Mills decided to accept the position held out to him. Furthermore, he was flat broke. Besides, he liked Wellsburg and its citizens. The atmosphere of the place appealed to him, and its appeal grew with leaps and bounds the better he learned to know Ruth Duncan.

"Here I am," Mills would muse with an enigmatic smile, as he labored behind his wicket, "here I am knocking down the munificent sum of one hundred iron men per month. One wonderful hundred bucks! And at that I'm saving money. Wouldn't this state of affairs tickle some funny-bones I know if they'd just get wind of it? Wouldn't it, now? Anyway, I'll lay low for a while, see what I can see, and there's no telling just what may pop. I'm on the inside now watching the wheels go round. Solitaire Downes is still kicking and pretty much on the job. Here's a swell chance to pull something big, I'd say!"

Mills had been hurrying home from the Duncan house in the pouring rain. He paused in the shelter of the bank entrance to light a cigarette. To his amazement, he found the door slightly ajar, and pushed into the building to investigate. As he stepped inside the roof seemed to crash down upon him. He tried to shout, but the shout became a mere rattle in his throat as he crumpled to the tiles.

When Trowbridge Mills came back to noticing things his head was aching horribly. He found himself bound hand and foot and sprawled in a chair, to which he was tied in the cage of the Wellsburg National Bank. At sight of two masked men working at the door of the vault he tried to cry out, but the gag in his mouth caused him to choke and gulp horribly.

"Might as well take things easy, bo," the bigger of the two men turned to leer at him. "He's only foolin' himself, ain't he, Red?"

"Yuh said it, Brute," Red answered with a throaty chuckle.

Then they turned their attention once more to the lock. Mills saw that the windows had been blanketed so that not a glimmer of light could escape. The equinoctial storm that was raging, together with the floods of water splashing against the glass, effectively swallowed up any noise that the yeggs might make, so they worked leisurely, even carelessly, it appeared.

Mills was helplessly watching his captors working at the vault's lock. They ignored him completely.

"I won't be needin' th' tools, Brute," Red croaked as he turned the knob of the old-fashioned vault's lock first this way and then that, at the same time straining his ear close so as to catch the click of the tum-

blers when they fell into place. "This'll be easy, Brute. Easier'n takin' a slide on th' ice."

"I'm glad we hooked Solitaire's outfit, jus' th' same," Brute answered, "even though we ain't needin' 'em this night. Ever since that Solitaire guy cashed in I been wantin' to git my hands on his outfit. Never knew th' lad, Red, but he was a wonder, jus' th' same, an' his kit's one lu-lu-lulu, believe me. If we'd git nothin' out o' this burg but them tools, we'd be in luck, Red. They sure are nifty, an' it was a pipe to break into Cleary's office an' make 'em our own."

On the floor in front of the vault a much-battered suit-case lay open, and scattered around it was a tumbled array of shining instruments that Mills knew well.

"Ain't they the goods?" Brute asked, eyeing them fondly.

"They're nifty," Red retorted, "but we'll git th' swag that's here without usin' them."

"The' late Solitaire's outfit," Brute gloated, "an' th' haul we're gonna make here spells one mighty big evenin'—eh, Red?"

"This ol' vault orter be one sweet honeycomb," Red mumbled. "This is th' time o' th' year when th' hicks settle their mortgages an' pay their interest. We orter come out o' this big. This vault orter be jus' bustin' with juicy swag."

Through narrowed lids Mills watched them and listened like a man in a trance.

"Click! Click! Click!" Red echoed the sound of the falling tumblers as he gave the knob a final twirl. "Bingo! Click! Click! Click! There you are, Brute!"

Red stepped back from the vault door with the air of a conqueror. Brute, unable to hold himself longer, pulled the heavy door open, easily swung it halfway back and rushed into the vault. Red followed him, and the muffled voices of the two men drifted out to Mills.

"We'll save a bunch o' time," Red was saying, "if we sort th' stuff in here, Brute; take what we want an' pack it in th' grips instead o' carryin' all th' junk outside. Yuh know we ain't wantin' to stay here any longer'n we gotta."

"Sounds good to me, Red," Brute replied. "Git th' bags."

Red hurried from the vault and carried back two large telescope bags.

"In a hurry," Mills thought. "Well, we'll see."

With a great effort he got to his feet, his face writhing in agony. The chair to which he was bound kept him bent horribly, and the cords that held him ate into his flesh. The door of the vault, swung back halfway, was no more than five feet from him. Although he was on his feet, he could not walk; his ankles were bound too tightly for that. He realized that any noise would attract the attention of the men, whose muffled, excited voices came to him from the interior of the vault. The sweat of torture was running down over his face in little rivulets. The shadowy room began to move around him; he swayed dizzily. With a groan that was but a faint gasp he gathered all his fast-failing energy and hurled himself headlong at the vault door, and it slammed shut and locked the two crooks in.

The rain was still pouring down at eight o'clock the next morning when George Washington Duncan inserted his key in the front-door lock of the Wellsburg National Bank.

"Mornin', Mr. Duncan," Police Chief Cleary came puffing up, his oilskins running water.

"Good-morning, Chief."

"You know that bank-burglar's outfit we got out o' th' wreck?" Cleary asked.

Duncan nodded.

"It was stolen from my office last night," Cleary explained. "Somebody broke in as slick as you please an' stole them tools. There's been real yeggs in town."

"The lock here is broken!" Duncan gasped.

"What's that?" Cleary demanded.

"The door's open!" Duncan whispered, his face as white as chalk.

"That accounts for them tools," Cleary growled.

They entered the bank together.

"What do you know!" Cleary ejaculated, staring pop-eyed.

Still bound to his chair, Mills was lying in a pool of hardened blood in front of the closed vault. Solitaire's tools lay scattered about.

"Criminy crickets!" Cleary breathed, scratching his head.

Very carefully Duncan removed the gag from Mills's mouth and unbound the bloody ropes from his torn flesh.

"Hello, Mr. Duncan!" Mills spoke weakly, as his eyelids fluttered open and he tried to force a smile.

"What does this mean?" Duncan asked solicitously.

"It means," Mills muttered thickly, "in the vault——"

Then he fainted.

While they were carrying the Things that had once been men from the vault of the Wellsburg National Bank, Trowbridge Mills was desperately clinging to Ruth Duncan's hand, as he lay in the Duncan guest-chamber whither he had been hurried from the bank.

"Solitaire Downes is dead," he murmured wearily, lifting his eyes to the girl's troubled face, "absolutely dead. He passed out last night for good and all. He's dead!"

"Yes, dear," she soothed him, "but you must not talk—not yet."

"He's dead, all right!" Mills insisted. "Isn't he?"

"Yes," she whispered.

Then smiling up at her like a little child and still clinging to her hand, he dropped off peacefully to sleep.

CROOKS PASS UP $15,000 POOR FUND; ADD $10

HERMAN BRICKMAN and his wife were on their way home in an autobile. Mr. Brickman had with him an envelope containing checks, pledges and several hundred dollars in cash, representing in all $15,000. The 1924 camgaign of a charitable federation to raise $600,000 was going on and $500,000 had already been collected. The $15,000 represented contributions made Monday and turned in at headquarters, the Unity Club on Bedford avenue. Mr. Brickman was taking the envelope home for safekeeping. He lives at 1146 Fifty-third street.

At Fifty-third street and New Utrecht avenue, Mr. Brickman says, two men jumped from a Ford, stopped his machine and demanded his valuables. They saw the envelope.

"You don't want that," said Brickman, "that envelope represents money that will be spent for orphans and widows, for fellows who may be down and out like you. I was a parole officer at Auburn and I met a lot of fellows, prisoners, who gave me money to help other people with. Lots of times I got money to help men who had just been released from prison. You, of course, can do as you like about it. But I hope you won't take it. It belongs to the poor."

The bandits looked at each other for a few moments and shook their heads. One of them, Mr. Brickman says, dug down into his pocket and pulled out a ten-dollar bill. "Here," he exclaimed, shortly. They jumped into their machine and sped away.

Morris D. Waldman, executive director of the drive, stated that he, his wife and daughter had left the Unity Club with the Brickmans in the machine. It stalled at Prospect Park Plaza and Union street, he said. Brickman and his wife waited while it was repaired in a garage. The Waldmans took a taxicab home. Waldman expressed the opinion that some one may have overheard mention made of the $15,000 represented by the envelope.

At the Fourth avenue police station it was said that Brickman had reported that he was stopped by bandits and that Detective Jack Keefe had been assigned to investigate.

The Emergency Bullet

By J. B. WARRENTON

THE sleepy little town of Hillsdale was awakened from its drowsiness one morning in the late fall by the startling news that Calvin Mayall, cashier of the Hillsdale Trust Company, the one and only savings institution which the town bragged of, had absconded. Fled from his home, wife and child, and every dollar the bank had in its keeping went with him. Fifty thousand dollars!

A hasty inventory of his books disclosed the fact that the cashier had been juggling them to hide defalcations that covered a period of more than a year. Consequently, the Hillsdale Trust Company closed its doors.

It was known that Calvin Mayall had been at his desk till after midnight. That was not uncommon for him. He was regarded by his employers and fellow townsmen as a tireless worker. Oftimes he spent many hours in the bank after closing time.

A visit to his home by the county sheriff revealed the fact that he had taken his automobile from the garage adjoining the house, his wife and little girl wholly ignorant of the visit.

All day long and after dusk the depositors were gathered in groups about the streets bemoaning their loss, and the sheriff and his deputies were scouring the woods and surrounding towns for the fugitive. Police of the larger towns and cities received a broadcasted description of the missing cashier and were ordered to apprehend him if found. Then in the midst of it all there came, madly driving a foam-bespattered horse hitched to a rickety buggy, a farmer named Neil Dalles. He brought the tragic news that Calvin Mayall was found shot to death, sprawling across the steering wheel of his automobile, on an unfrequented road a few miles outside the town.

The road where the stalled car and its dead occupant was discovered by Dalles was a short-cut often taken to reach the railroad station. At this time of the year the road was good, but it was impassable in the winter and spring. The car, an old model, was drawn up to the right side of the road. Cold and rigid, the body was lying on the steering wheel as described by the farmer.

A cursory examination revealed a gaping wound in his right groin. A .45 caliber revolver, fully loaded, was lying on the seat beside him. In his pocket was a box of cartridges of the same caliber as those with which the revolver had been loaded. But the strange feature about it all was that there was not one dollar of the bank's money in his possession or in the car.

The county coroner arrived shortly after daybreak. He ordered the sheriff to drive the remains to the town's undertaker, and then house the car safely under lock and key until after the inquest.

The coroner disclosed many startling facts. First, the bullet which killed the late bank cashier was of the same caliber as the bullets in his own revolver His gun was identified by his wife. Next, the bullet had taken an upward course, entering at the pit of the abdomen, just over the right leg, plowing up its angular course until it embedded itself in the heart on his left side.

The only solution of the problem was that the shot was fired by some one stooping low, and the door of the sedan was open when it occurred. The theory of suicide was not entertained. Revolvers do not kill, reload themselves, then lay them-

selves gently beside their victims. Of course a human hand could kill the owner with his own revolver, replace the discharged cartridge and put it where it was found. But would the murderer take the time and pains to do so and clean the gun as well? The condition of the revolver found beside the dead man showed that it had not been recently discharged.

But what had become of the stolen bank money? Did he hide it somewhere in the nearby woods? The place was searched for miles around, but the searchers failed to uncover it or the suitcase which the money was supposed to have been in.

The local police were in a quandary. No one in the town, except the bereaved wife and child of the late bank cashier, mourned the untimely end of the man. He had stolen their hard-earned savings, and fate intervened in his flight. But where was their savings?

A few days later the county sheriff was holding a conference with his deputies and the town's officials, checking and summing up numerous theories and snorting disgust at phantom clues, when the telephone bell rang.

"This is the sheriff of Claxionville speaking," came a voice over the wire. Claxionville was a mill town some twelve miles as the crow flies from Hillsdale. "I've taken into custody for drunkenness," the voice went on, "a man who says his name is Pat Drummy. He had been in town for the past forty-eight hours or so and was drinking his head off. He's been flashing rolls of money big enough to dam the East River, and got so loaded up with hootch that he started to pave the streets with yellowbacks. I locked him up for safe keeping, and when I searched his room at a lodging-house I found more money than I ever saw in my life. I think he's the bird who played 'second thief's best owner,' so hurry over here and take him away before he buys the town. Good-by."

Sober, sick and crestfallen, Patrick Drummy—millionaire for two days—was taken back to Hillsdale in irons. He confessed that he stole the money, but denied the killing. His story ran thus:

On the day before Mayall was found he arrived in Hillsdale on a freight train. He was hungry and tired of clinging to the rods, so when the train stopped to take on freight he crawled from beneath and headed into the woods.

He slept until sundown, then went in search of food. At a woodcutter's shack he found some food, and when leaving stole a revolver. The gun was found in his room. Afterwards he found a sheltered place between two trees and went to sleep again. How long he slept he could not say, but he was awakened by the report of a shot. It was not very loud, in fact it was muffled—more like a tire blow-out.

Then, as he became fully awake, he heard the hum of an engine running. He walked in the direction of the sound and came upon the sedan standing in the road. No lights were showing and no signs of life about. He then—bent on robbery, he admitted—gingerly opened the door and peered inside.

Powder smoke assailed his nostrils, and he discerned a body sprawled over the steering wheel. He was scared stiff when he found that the occupant was dead, but grabbed the suitcase—knowing nothing at the time of the fortune it contained. He then fled into the woods.

Drummy worked his way across country, keeping out of the way of habitations until he reached the town of Claxionville. The rest has been already told.

"Was the revolver which you stole from the woodchopper's hut loaded?" asked the coroner, who was conducting the "third degree."

"Yes," replied the prisoner.

"Every chamber?"

"I guess so, although I didn't try it."

"You didn't fire it, eh?" thundered the examiner.

"Before God, I didn't," cried the accused.

The learned doctor shook his head sagely.

"That's all," he nodded, turning to the sheriff.

Patrick Drummy was later indicted by the grand jury, tried and convicted, a few weeks later, for murder in the first degree

and sentenced to die in the electric chair the first week of December.

The lawyer who was assigned by the court to defend him put up the usual defense used in such cases, then retired with the sensation of one who had done his duty. The district attorney then addressed the court, citing the following reasons why the prisoner should be found guilty.

First, he had served several terms in divers jails for theft. Second, he confessed to stealing the money which was found on his person and in his room. Third, the revolver found in his pocket was of the same make and caliber as the one which fired the fatal shot, and one bullet had been discharged.

Thus the case was closed, as far as the courts were concerned, and the unfortunate man was taken to prison until the time arrived when he would walk through the narrow green door and end his career in a grave of quicklime.

"Finished" would be marked against his name by the public, and after the execution he would be forgotten.

But there was one among the indifferent spectators of the one-sided trial who could not forget the law's debtor. During the whole proceeding the stalwart figure sat with keen interest. Deep down in his heart, Sergeant Cooper of the State Constabulary felt that there had been a miscarriage of justice.

"A jury of his peers found him guilty," he ruminated as he descended the courthouse steps after the sentence; "why should I challenge their verdict?"

But the sense of fair play so consistently predominated in the officer's mind that he concluded to look into the case and save from death, if possible, another victim of circumstantial evidence.

Thus he started on his mission of mercy, and for the next two weeks he carefully and skillfully pieced together an alibi which would save the condemned man. He felt confident.

A visit to the garage where the death car was in storage, awaiting an order from the court as to its disposal, terminated Sergeant Cooper's quest. The next morning at nine o'clock he was ushered into the presence of the district attorney.

"I'm here in the interest of Patrick Drummy," he began, removing his cap and drawing a chair close to the county prosecutor's desk. "I've unearthed new evidence which I'm sure will prove him innocent."

"So," said the other laconically.

"Yes, sir," resumed the trooper; "Pat Drummy never shot Calvin Mayall. He shot himself."

The district attorney sprang erect, then lowered himself slowly back again. A supercilious curl marred the corner of his mouth as he asked:

"What became of the second revolver, sergeant, if that's the case? That's the only way it could be done."

"There was no second revolver, sir," said Cooper easily, his clear gray eyes peering straight into the slitted one of his interrogator, "the emergency brake fired the bullet."

"What do you mean?" cried the attorney, with a show of heat. "Tut, tut, sergeant; suppose you explain what you mean."

"All right, sir," he began, "I'll gladly do so.

"I first found out that the late cashier had bought a box of cartridges from the salesman at Whitney's general store in Hollis. He told the salesman—whose name is Perkins—that he had been taking target practice, and showed him an empty revolver. Asked why he didn't purchase his ammunition in his home town, he answered that they were sold out. The gun practise he declared was for the safety of the bank in case of a hold-up.

"Then I called on his widow and learned there that there wasn't a bullet of that caliber in the house. Next I called on the sheriff. He allowed me to search the clothes of the dead man, and also showed me the box of cartridges which were found on the body. Those I counted and they numbered forty-three. The revolver was the next to come under my eye, and the chambers of that were fully loaded. Six cartridges. The original box when purchased at the store contained fifty .45 caliber cartridges. Six

were in the gun. Forty-three in the box. Where was the other bullet?

"That I set out to find, if possible. But before doing so I went in quest of the woodcutter whose revolver was stolen by the convicted man. That was no easy task, as he had gone to visit his mother who is ill in Canada. I located him after a while and learned from him that he had discharged the one shot from his revolver the night before it was stolen. Some animal had been looting his supplies which he had laid up for the coming winter, and that night he surprised it, fired one shot, but it got away.

"After getting his promise that he would testify if called upon, I made a visit to the garage where the sedan is stored. As you no doubt know, it's an old-type affair, the emergency brake and gear lever on the right-hand side, a double-slotted steel quadrant rising an inch from the floor, enclosing the base of both levers. The slot in which the emergency brake is inserted has a sweep from the center, both ways. The space between the steel one-quarter circle which the lever sweeps back and forward in is less than a quarter-inch.

"To release the brake-band of the car before starting, it's necessary to raise a latch on the side of the lever and push it forward to the solid end of the quadrant. That's what fired the fatal shot. And this is how it happened.

"Calvin Mayall, when going through those dense woods in his flight, must have heard sounds that alarmed him. Bringing his car to a stop, he brought forth the empty revolver and box of cartridges and loaded the weapon. In doing so, as he was carrying no lights, a cartridge dropped from his hand. That was the least of his worries, so when the gun was loaded he pocketed the box and placed the revolver on the seat beside him where it was easy to get at if needed. Then he shoved forward the emergency brake.

"The bullet which fell from his hand landed rim down and wedged itself into the narrow slot of the quadrant at the solid end forward. It was wedged at an angle of about forty-five degrees, the leaden slug pointing at the groin of the seated man. When the lever crushed against the solid end it exploded, with the result which you now know. Here is the crushed shell which I found embedded and dug out of the quadrant."

Sergeant Cooper laid a flattened copper shell on the district attorney's desk.

"When this thing gets out," smiled the county's prosecutor, "I fancy the bank depositors will say that sure was an emergency bullet that saved their money."

"Fate plays queer pranks," quoted the trooper as he arose to leave. "I hope this will be a lesson to Pat Drummy in the future."

BOMB EXPLODES IN AUTO

BUFFALO, N. Y., March 16—When he stepped on the starter of his automobile in his own garage this morning. Samuel Licata exploded a bomb which burned him severely. The explosive had been placed beneath the floor boards under the driver's feet by plotters in such a manner that when the engine started the explosion occurred.

The charge was light and the damage was slight. Licata put the car in the garage last night and left the door unlocked. No motive has been ascribed for the act.

The Mystery of the "Ice King"

By MONT HURST

THE brakes on the wheels of a luxurious limousine screeched as the car skidded on the wet pavement. An aged man crossing the street was evidently deaf to the sound, for the car knocked him to the pavement and passed over his body. The chauffeur stopped as soon as possible and went back to the venerable man. A crowd gathered. Up came Patrolman Joseph Riley. With the assistance of the chauffeur he carried the aged victim into a nearby drug-store. A clerk started to call an ambulance.

"'Tis no use, my lad," said Riley, as he saw that the old man was dead; "the auld fellow has wint to his Maker."

He took the chauffeur's name and address and those of the few witnesses of the accident. Then he searched the pockets of the corpse for means of identification, but his search was in vain. A few dollars, a knife and a clipping from the maritime news section of a newspaper were all he found.

On one arm was tattooed the words: "Ice King."

The body of the old man was taken to the morgue. Descriptions were broadcasted by the police department. Newspapers finally came out with short items regarding the unclaimed body. Still no one was found who could identify the corpse.

Among those who viewed the body was Professor Harry Sledge, philanthropist and amateur criminologist. His curiosity had been aroused when he heard of the unclaimed corpse. As he viewed the remains he wondered at the mystery of it all. The old man was evidently all alone in the world, and had passed into the Great Beyond without a friend. Here was a puzzle. Professor Sledge decided to learn the identity of the old man, and at the same time assist the police authorities.

In the course of a few days the body was buried in potter's field. A simple burial service was conducted by the head of a city mission. In the cemetery a half-dozen people stood at the grave, among them Professor Sledge. He cast piercing glances at the faces of the few persons present, in the hope that among them might be some one who knew the old man. But he failed. The mystery was getting more interesting for Professor Sledge the more he thought of it.

Three weeks later the professor sat in his study holding a newspaper. He had just finished reading an account of the rifling of the grave of the old man who died unknown. The tomb had been opened, the body was taken and local police were doing their utmost to apprehend the grave robbers.

Professor Sledge reviewed the situation. No medical college was in the vicinity, and, besides, he knew that such a proceeding was not in keeping with present-day ethics of the medical profession.

But why was the body stolen?

These questions raced through the mind of Professor Sledge as he started to interview the Chief of Police. Their conversation brought nothing to light of any importance.

That night Professor Sledge attended his monthly lecture of the Historical Society. An address was delivered by Commodore Swain regarding the Gold Rush to Alaska. The lecture of the commodore dealt with the trip by some of the pioneers on the packet *Ice King*, plying between Seattle and Alaskan ports. Of course Professor

Sledge was interested upon hearing this. The words "Ice King" were tattooed on the arm of the dead man. It was known to Sledge that Peter Durkin, president of the defunct Drover's National Bank, had been one of the crew of a ship bound for Alaska in his early youth.

The professor rubbed his hands in satisfaction at the thought of an interview with Durkin, and when the lecture was finished he started for Durkin's home.

When he arrived he found the shutters drawn. The front door was locked. An inquiry in the neighborhood developed the fact that Durkin had not been seen for several weeks, following the failure of the Drover's National Bank.

Back to the police station went Professor Sledge, where he held an earnest conversation with the chief. He felt confident Durkin might throw some light on the identity of the stolen body. A search warrant was obtained. He already held a deputy sheriff's commission.

Armed with the warrant, he hurried back to the Durkin place. There was no response to Sledge's knock. He then went to a window and forced it up. Cautiously climbing into a room he walked softly through the house. Somewhere he heard voices. As he entered the kitchen, the voices sounded nearer. A stairway led from the kitchen to the cellar. He crept slowly down the stairs, but paused near the bottom. A strange sight met his eyes. Peter Durkin stood over a human body with a surgeon's scalpel in his hand, his son-in-law, Henry Baum, at his side. On the floor lay the stolen body of the mysterious old man who had so aroused the professor's curiosity.

Drawing a revolver, Professor Sledge confronted the two grave robbers.

"Hands up, gentlemen," he exclaimed.

The two men stepped back, their eyes blazing with fear. Hands in the air, their faces became pale and the palsy of fright shook their limbs.

On the floor laid a small silver tube. Professor Sledge picked it up and put it in his pocket. The two men stood looking first at each other, then at Professor Sledge.

The silence was finally broken by the words of Sledge.

"I have already notified Chief Murphy to send the wagon in case I did not appear at the station in twenty minutes. They should be here now."

At that moment a knocking was heard at the kitchen door above. Knowing that he could not be heard, the professor fired a shot against the brick wall of the cellar. In a minute more the kitchen door crashed open and in came a police sergeant with six men.

"Down here," called Sledge. When the policemen joined him Durkin and Baum were handcuffed and put in the patrol wagon. Professor Sledge looked at the body, and followed Sergeant Johnson to the latter's car.

They finally reached the police station, and the questioning of Durkin was started.

"As I've done nothing very criminal I don't mind explaining," he said coolly. Then he started on his story, addressing his remarks to the police captain.

"Twenty years ago I was a medical student. My health failing, I secured a position as ship's doctor on the *Ice King*, bound for Alaska during the gold rush. A great gold vein had been discovered by Nels Lindstorm, a former member of the crew. He showed me a map of its location, and I at once knew that he would be wealthy. On a trip to Seattle he was murdered, and the map was stolen. This occurred while he was on board my ship.

"Starting into the hold of the vessel one night, I saw Jim Harris, the fireman, poring over a paper, and I watched him and saw it was the stolen map. He put the paper in his coat pocket and went on deck. Later in the night the *Ice King* was crushed between heavy icebergs. I rendered all the aid possible. Harris was seriously injured. His leg was torn and shattered. I thought he was fatally injured, but he recovered. When he was accused of stealing the map and searched the stolen map was not found. He had evidently secreted it somewhere. Years later he wrote me a letter saying:

" 'I took a silver spoon, fashioned a small tube, and hid the map in it. Then I spliced

the shattered bones of my leg together and inserted the small tube. A wonderful hiding place. Later on I can dig up Lindstorm's treasure and become a millionaire.'

"But he never carried out his cherished plan, for a crooked deal sent him to prison for years, and when he was released he was an old man.

"I had lost all trace of him, until by chance I viewed the remains of the man in the morgue and recognized him as Jim Harris. I dug up the body to get the tube. That's all, gentlemen. Anything very serious in that save body-snatching?"

Professor Sledge opened the tube with his penknife. A small paper fell out. He opened it and inside of it was the missing map.

"You may get a short sentence or fine, Durkin," he remarked dryly, "but the relatives of Harris shall get this map if they can be found, as they are the rightful owners."

And the police locked Durkin up.

THE CASHIER DIDN'T KNOW HER

IT was an epochal afternoon in Memphis, Tenn., for Miss Margaret Jones, eighteen, a bobbed-hair blonde, dolled up in a chic automobile storm coat and with the most delightful command of 42d street vernacular Memphis girls had heard since Eva Tanguay was in town. She strolled into a downtown department store and told a floor-walker she was going to be married.

"I've just deposited $10,000 down at the bank," she said, "and I'm going to blow the works for a trousseau that'll make their hair curl."

Miss Jones's debut in the store was "a scream," the salesgirls agreed. Her exit was a bit flustrating, but the entree was something swell.

For six hours Miss Jones held sway while a score of shopgirls laid at her feet for approval a wealth of silks, satins, imported lingerie, furs, shoes, slippers, millinery, laces, ribbons. She staged an orgy of buying that created such excitement among the salesgirls, the assistant manager of the store enjoyed a peek at the dainty, chic and prosperous customer who was having her last fling before signing away her freedom at the altar.

"Set them aside," she would remark with a regal wave of her hand as she swept from one department to another, while salesgirls gathered up her purchases for delivery at her suite in the Hotel Gayoso.

It was 8 o'clock in the evening when Miss Jones reached the millinery display rooms. All the other departments had been closed. She was threatening to take the whole stock, excepting those creations not imported from Paris, when it came time for Cinderella to change her identity.

Up to that hour, Miss Jones's purchases totalled $9,341.48, according to the accountants, who had concluded an inventory of her remarkable buying, and she had given checks for that amount. It had occured to the assistant manager that he might inquire of the bank, and to his utter disgust the cashier didn't know Miss Jones.

Then the police arrived. Not the blase, ordinary, blue-coated, brass-buttoned coppers, but a squad of detective sergeants.

"I'm Margaret Jones, No. 1125 North Third street, Birmingham," she said in a show of anger. "I live there with my aunt, Mrs. Mollie Jones, and I'm soon to be married to Mr. E. W. Jones, No. 908 Michigan avenue, Chicago."

Inquiry by police who communicated with Birmingham and Chicago authorities failed to elicit any information as to the girl's identity.

Detectives said Miss Jones had the most assured air they had seen in many a day.

The Black Pearls of Sydney

By HUGH THOMASON

RED WENGER sat bending over a rough table in the middle of his room. His eyes were fixed on an open box, and the look in them was greedy and gloating, until he raised his glance and saw a long human shadow on the floor.

Shadows are always dark, presaging things, and this shadow sent a cold shiver down Wenger's back.

At the end of one of the long, spidery arms of the shadow there was the silhouette of a weapon, a flat, snub-nosed automatic. It remained immovable. Wenger did not move either. His Winchester hung on the wall, out of his reach. He did not even turn round, but sat still with his eyes on the immobile shadow, the color ebbing from his face, his eyes glazed, his mouth flaccid, half-open, showing a row of uneven, discolored teeth.

The shadow went away suddenly, and the liquid gold of the sunlight again flowed over the floor. Still Wenger did not turn. He waited, his gaze thoughtful, reminiscent. A minute passed, then with one bound he reached the wall where his rifle hung, snatched it down, and ran to the door, the weapon at the level of his hip, his trembling fingers curled about the trigger.

From the open doorway he saw a stretch of white beach, the blue of the sea, cut here and there by nodding, feathery palms. Beyond lay the reef, where breakers boomed and white surf broke. But the beach was empty, the intervening lagoon was empty, the sea rippled smiling and enigmatic under the sun. He looked to the right and to the left, stole out and went around the hut, but saw no one. Then he remembered the box, and went in again to lock it.

It was filled to the brim with pearls, picked pearls of a black hue and luster, not the uneven crop gained by a pearler, but graduated gems, enough to make three necklaces of great value—pearls that had been laboriously sought over a period of time, so that some wealthy beauty in one of the world's great cities should outshine a plutocratic rival. Here was matter for battle and sudden death, and Wenger knew it—no man better.

As he locked the box and looked about for a hiding place, the rifle in touch of his hand, his eyes casting furtive glances at the doorway, his mind went swiftly back to the getting of that treasure. He and Taggart and Hobart-Town Harry had secured it. The two others had been necessary to the execution of his plan, but he had never intended that they should share the booty.

Old Waldner, the jeweler of Sydney, had collected these murder-begetting playthings. He had never kept them at the shop, but always in his private house, adding pearl to pearl, paying honestly enough for them, never knowing that hawk-eyes knew of his increasing store. It had been easy enough to kill Waldner, easy enough, as it proved, to get away from the scene of the crime, but by no means so easy to lose Taggert and Hobart-Town Harry.

Still he had done it. Taggert came in dead one morning on a fishing-boat. They had found him floating on the tide. Hobart-Town had a hand in the matter, too, being persuaded, like Wenger, that the fewer sharers the more gain. Wenger and Harry left together on a tramp steamer going to Singapore, and it was there that Wenger had bribed a local thug to rid him of the company of his last confederate.

Wenger had no illusion as to the difficulty of disposing of the pearls in a Eu-

ropean market. If he sold them openly, he might find himself in a trap, and if he took them to a fence he would not get a fifth of their value. Then he conceived a plan. He struck back to the Pacific in Gilson's trading schooner, and was landed on Papagi, where there was a shell-band, half exploited in the past, but given up when the yield proved small. Gilson was to bring out divers and gear on his next trip, and they would fish the bank.

No one in Sydney seemed to associate Wenger with the robbery and murder of Waldner. It was laid to Taggert and Hobart-Town Harry. Wenger was going to be an innocuous pearler, and he was going to open the shells himself that his divers brought up, and to find in them all the stolen treasure he wanted to market. Thus he would camouflage his operations and get his price, as no one would suspect his pearls of being stolen goods.

Before that strange shadow had fallen across his floor he had often laughed over the plan, telling himself that neither of his partners could have thought that out. He did not laugh now, for it seemed to him that Hobart-Town Harry was on his track.

The shadow had been long, and it had held its snub-nosed weapon in its left hand. It seemed to him that it could be no one else but Harry. Possibly the yellow man in Singapore had bungled his job, and Hobart-Town had got news of his passage in Gilson's boat, and come after him. The sweat stood out on his brow at the thought.

Of the three partners Hobart-Town Harry had always been the most cruel, remorseless, insatiate. Wenger remembered the fact now with horror. If it were Harry who had come into his doorway, casting that monstrous and terrifying shadow, worse events were coming.

He had been at the mercy of the man he had cheated during that moment when he sat at his table with his back to the menace. But Hobart-Town had spared him, and those whom Harry spared were no favorites of fate, but men dedicated to a more savage revenge than the release of a quick shot.

Wenger shuddered. He thought of Harry's sunken, haggard face, with its burning malevolent eyes—eyes that were always flickering with malicious light. Harry had come for the pearls, but they would fall to him later, after he had thoroughly punished the man who had tried to cheat him of his share.

The island was large and thickly grown. There were a thousand places of concealment for an enemy. He might, if he so wished, shoot Wenger from ambush when he went out for food or water. Wenger put down the box and quickly surveyed his supplies. There were tins of meat in the hut, but little else.

He had been accustomed to take his food as he wanted it from the prodigal resources of the island, since he did not expect to see any other white man there until Gilson returned with the diving outfit.

He considered the question of Gilson. Two weeks, at least, must pass before Gilson could arrive. Until then he had to hold the hut against the shadow.

He closed the door. The window opening caught his eye. He took a hammer and attacked the table, knocked the legs from it, and began to barricade the window. When it was shut up he breathed more freely. The problem of water was the next to be solved. He got his supplies from a little stream that trickled down into a rock basin amid the tree-ferns. It lay half a mile away, and he had only a pannikin filled with the precious fluid in the hut.

A small empty keg stood against the wall. He contemplated it with an uneasy eye. To carry that, his rifle, the box of pearls, all together seemed an impossibility, if he wished at a moment's notice to be able to bring the rifle into action.

Hobart-Town Harry would watch him as he went to the water, would grin in his diabolical way, knowing that he sweated with fear, and would sweat each time he went out, until there came the moment of their clash, or the merciful bullet from ambush that would put an end to his fears for all time. That was the sort of situation that would please Hobart-Town.

At that moment Wenger thought of old Waldner. Perhaps the old man had felt as he felt now. A wave of self-pity was

mingled with an extraordinary feeling of sympathy for the dead jeweler. For the first time in his life he visualized, mentally, what death must be like, and felt horror for his own murderous past. No more shooting for him if he got out of this. Killing had a new and ugly edge to it when he himself threatened to be the victim.

Still, he must go out to get water while he retained even a fragment of his nerve. A day or two of suspense and he would not dare to face the open ground outside the hut.

He unlocked the box again and began to put the pearls in paper, then transfer them to his pockets. When he had done that he dug a hole in the earth floor and buried the empty box. He made a sling for the empty keg, suspended it over his shoulders, took his rifle and stole out.

The beach and the jungle still slept. The day brooded hotly, the air quivering over the ground, swimming dizzily in a mirage, as if water rippled across it. Wenger's face wore a hunted look as he began to traverse the open space. He cast his eye from side to side as he walked, watching the fringes of the jungle, throwing his rifle forward a dozen times as he mistook a dark branch or a patch of shadow for the body of his lurking enemy.

His heart beat like an immence hammer and seemed to strike his ribs on either side. He strained to breathe, as if that horribly pulsing organ had crowded his lungs into a narrow space.

And all the while his tongue burned, his mouth dried up, his throat was afire. He kept swallowing as he went on. There were times he prayed that Harry would shoot, would come out into the open, anything but lie hidden watching him, chuckling under his breath, as Harry would do.

As he approached the edge of the jungle he sweated anew.

From somewhere ahead he heard the musical faint tinkle of the stream dripping in a rocky grotto, purling musically among the stones. He dived in among the bushes. The hot fragrance of frangipani filled his nostrils, the scent of flowers that rioted colorfully in the semi-green gloom. So far he was safe.

His mind was working now. He would go out after dark to look for his enemy. Under the cover of night they would be equal. He might come upon him camping or sleeping and settle accounts. His experience of this morning, crossing the open under the gaze of invisible eyes, had cut the roots of his courage. The keg of water would last two weeks. He would not go out again by day. Never! The horror of the past quarter of an hour was still upon him.

He came presently upon a deep, cool pool below a ledge of rock, over which a tiny waterfall plashed, gurgling. Somewhere in the jungle behind him a wild pig rooted and foraged, and the sound of its rustling stiffened Wenger where he stood. He would have to bend down to fill his keg, to expose his back to the stalker he imagined behind him, and he could not do it.

He leaped the stream frantically and turned about so as to face the hidden menace. It was an extraordinary thing that he felt easier in facing death than awaiting it with averted eyes. Anyway, he had to get water.

It was on the third day after this that a man named Henderson beached his canoe on the farther side of the island and landed to look about. It was three years since he had set up a trading station on an atoll island forty miles to the east, and they had been years of progressive leanness, so that he swore regularly at the memory of Burr, the man he had met in Sydney and sold him the trade on Sadu for the sum of twenty thousand dollars.

The trade on Sadu was worth about twenty thousand cents, and, after three years of striving to make a living out of a hundred indifferent natives, Henderson had set out in his canoe to prospect for greener fields in the surrounding ocean.

Thus in one of his excursions he found Wenger's sanctuary, and wandered inland, thinking that here was a spot far better worth living in than the miserable atoll so highly recommended by Burr. He was tired of trading, and thought of a plantation, and

the groves of cocoanut palms all about him spoke of copra with a big C.

He was about to emerge from the jungle that clothed the interior of the island when his eyes fell on Wenger.

Henderson was a companionable fellow, and he had seen few white men during the past few years. His first impulse was to go to Wenger, shake him by the hand and have a yarn. The impulse died almost as soon as it was born, for Wenger was not a pretty fellow at any time, and now, with his fear-distorted face, his furtive glances to either side, and the ready rifle he carried in his hand, he looked what he was—a cornered beast ready to strike, to kill and rend at the least provocation.

So Henderson watched him cross the open space with the stealth of a cat, then drew back deeper into the jungle and sat down to think the matter over.

Three lean years make a mark on a man—a double mark if he has entered upon those years with hope, and knows that a woman far away in the civilized West shares his suspense. Henderson's heart was cold in him of late, for he was a man in love, and it seemed to him sometimes that he was wasting the best years of a girl's life to no purpose.

Often he had thought of writing to her and offering her her freedom. But he was afraid, for without hope of her he knew he might be tempted to put an end to his lonely existence.

His first impression was that Wenger was mad, that the man had lost grip of himself in his solitude. He saw nothing to hint at an enemy, and yet Wenger's whole air was that of a fugitive flying in terror from a menace that froze the blood in his veins. It would be rank folly to show himself to such a fellow. The odds were that the madman would take him for the incarnation of the menace and loose off his Winchester without further notice.

Henderson was attracted by the island, but if he were going to settle here, and bring over his men from the atoll, he must settle on the farther side, remote from the frenzied gentleman with the murderous eye and the ready rifle.

Meantime he surveyed the vegetable resources of the place, and decided to stop overnight and reconnoitre the beath where he had first landed, with the view to a location for a house. So he sat down towards sunset in a little glade by the stream, ate some food he had brought, smoked a cigarette and returned to thoughts of Wenger.

He finally decided that he had been an ass not to speak to the man. Probably he had exaggerated the fear in the stranger's face; at all events it seemed unlikely now that he would have opened fire on an entire stranger without so much as a question. First impressions are stronger than others when they come to us, but they fade sooner. Wenger was a white man.

He might be of assistance. It would be foolish to settle down here, as he had settled down in Sadu, without making sure that a good living was to be made out of it. The sun had set when he came to this conclusion, but he knew pretty well where Wenger's hut stood. He had seen Wenger retire into it after he had crossed the open stretch, and believed he could find his way to it even in the dark.

Yes, that was the idea. He would go see the other white man and ask him for information. A hunger to see the girl back home sprang upon him again urgently. If there was nothing doing here he would work a passage back home somehow and shake the dust of the East from his feet forever. He rose at once and set off through the jungle toward the house near the beach.

He had to proceed slowly until he had emerged from the jungle rim. There was no light in Wenger's house, but he saw its dark shape loom up against the starlight night sky, and plodded on cheerfully over the silent sand until he found himself at the closed door.

He knocked modestly. There was no answer, only he seemed to hear a sound, half-gasp, half-oath, and a noise as of some one inside moving quickly across the floor. He waited a few minutes. Before he could knock again the ear-splitting crack of a rifle at close range rang out thrice and three splintered holes in the door showed where

the bullets had crashed through the woodwork.

Henderson did not stop to examine them. Something had lifted his hat from his head, and he ran, ran like a hare until he was again in the shelter of the jungle of vegetation inland. Mad as a hatter the fellow in the house! Why, the scoundrel had nearly shot him. That was a dashed fine welcome to give a man who had only come for a chat.

Inside the house Wenger stood holding his smoking rifle, his heart thumping, the sweat pouring down his face. A fortnight before Gilson could arrive, and this was the second time that devil had come.

Come, and gone. That was the worst of it. He was playing a devilish tune on Wenger's heart-strings. Knock and run, d—n him. When was he going to get a sleep?

There is often something of the degenerate in the criminal with murderous tendencies, and this degenerate in Wenger was working out now. The man who kills another without remorse is not sane-minded. The mental fiber is weak, rotted somewhere in the strands of it. It was from this time that old Waldner began to reign in Wenger's thoughts, to run riot there. He saw him sometimes in his mind's eye, sniggering at the man who had killed him, and now trembled and sweated for his own safety.

Follow him up, the fellow who threatened him? Not much, said Wenger to himself as he waited, trembling in the dark, for a second knock. His late partner might be hiding just outside. His plans for the night had been incubated in the light of day, but now, when he thought of venturing out to search for his relentless enemy, terror seized him. It would be safer to stand a siege until Gilson could come.

He had a certain amount of animal courage, and had he come face to face with Hobart-Town Harry in the first instance, he might have joined issue with him in hot blood. But the thought of the other's subtly cruel mind, the knowledge that, if Harry had only come to kill, he would not have spared him when he caught him at a disadvantage, chilled him and sapped his nerve. He was like a man in a nightmare, who fights with something that he cannot seize or hurt, something that eludes while it follows him, a menace that cannot be driven off.

While he had the pearls he was not safe, and even if he threw them away or gave them as a sop to his enemy, he was still in danger, for only he and Harry had seen Waldner die, and Hobart-Town would leave no embittered witness to threaten future trouble.

To the man with an ill conscience, thought is more brain-wrecking than violence, and Wenger, shut up in his barricaded house, had only too much time for thought. Memories pressed upon him, and from them there was no mistake. He paced the floor restlessly half the night, rifle in hand, his ears strained to catch the slightest sound. Then he lay down and tried to sleep, aching with fatigue, his eyes wide open in the dark, his eyelids weighted with exhaustion, yet in some mysterious way resisting his weak-willed attempt to close them.

Towards dawn he fell off and slept, but with the approach of sunrise a bird rose from the trees inland and alighted heavily on his corrugated iron hut roof. He sprang from bed with a wild cry, flung himself upon his rifle and stared about. The bird was frightened by the cry, and rose with a squawk, flapping off clumsily towards the trees again. Wenger put down his rifle, took up a bottle of spirits and applied himself to it.

Henderson had not run very far, after all. It was too dark to cross the thick jungle, and it was unlikely that the madman, as he styled Wenger, would attempt to follow him just then. There was a stubborn streak in him, too, and the island seemed so full of prospect compared to his own miserable atoll that he was loath to give up the idea of settling there without further investigation of its possibilities.

The madman couldn't own the whole place, he told himself. There was no reason why he should not live on the farther side a few miles away if he could obtain labor and make an arrangement with one of the small steamer lines to transport his copra.

He did not speculate very long on the cause of Wenger's madness. The fellow drank to excess or else he had been marooned there by some callous skipper who preferred a maniac's room to his company on board. So he curled himself up presently in a dry corner and went to sleep.

On the following day he had a look at the hut. It was still shut, and he turned away and struck across the island, studying its resources closely as he went. He knew that he had been right in his estimate of the potentialities of the place. Everything that man could want grew there. The place only needed clearing, planting; the cocopalms were innumerable. As he went along he thought of the girl back home, and asked himself suddenly if it were not possible that she could come out to him there.

The climate was fine; he could get a house built in no time. The only possible flies in the amber were questions of transport for his products and a sufficiency of native labor. But he could go into these things when he got home. Perhaps the natives on the atoll would migrate with him. At least he could find out.

When he thought of that he decided to return to where he had left his canoe and hurry home as fast as the wind would take him. He quickened his steps, forgetting Wenger in these new and happy dreams, in the thought of seeing again the woman he loved. It all seemed so simple when he went over it.

He had no doubt that she would come if he could make a home for her. Once or twice she had written hinting at it, but he had been ashamed to bring her out to see his poverty and the leanness of the post where so few came to trade.

He came out some hours later on the farther beach and looked towards the lagoon. But the beach was bare and his canoe was gone. His face grew anxious as he saw the marks where the little craft had been launched. Beyond the reef the smiling sea was empty. Some one had stolen his canoe and was already out of reach.

That settled the affair. He must stay here. There was food to eat and water to drink. Perhaps the mad white man had his lucid moments and might be approached. Or was he, indeed, crazy after all? It might only be that he feared an attack by natives, and had mistaken Henderson's knock for an attempt to force the door.

There must be natives somewhere on this large island. At all events, he must settle down for the moment until he could open relations with the other white man, or find means of establishing contact with a ship.

Wenger finished drinking and sat smoking in his hut. The spirit had warmed and enheartened him. He looked about the room and told himself that two weeks would soon pass. No one could get at him where he was. That was all right. He had food and water. He had tobacco. The only danger lay outside. He took another drink and grinned to himself, jeering at Hobart-Town Harry under his breath. He sat there for a long time, in the twilight left by the door and the window opening barricaded by the table.

He ate about midday and then paced his room. He began to get restless as night drew near. The false encouragement of the raw spirit ebbed, and he thought of the long night with growing anxiety. What a long time it had been since morning, endless. Thirteen more days like this. He glared around him angrily.

At night he lay down. Nothing had happened. But he could not sleep, and presently rose again, struck a match, lighted an oil lamp and looked for his bottle. There was sleep in that, and a respite from his thoughts. He sat down on the bed with it and finished the liquor, stumbled over to put out the light, and threw himself down once more. This time he slept heavily. It was dawn when he awoke.

Three days more passed. As he rose, with a mouth like hot brass, he went to the keg for a drink of water, filled a cup and put it to his lips. He put it down again with an oath. The water was thick, undrinkable.

There was no option now. He had to go out and get more water. His potations during the last few days had shaken him. He was afraid to go out, but he dared not remain without water. In this pass he ap-

plied himself once more to the source of heady courage, and, having drunk a tumblerful of spirits, strapped on his keg, took his rifle in hand and went out.

It was about this time that Henderson had returned to the shelter of the bush near the hut to see if he could get in touch with Wenger. He had been watching the hut when he saw Wenger come out and screwed up his courage to hail him. An instinct of caution warned him that it would be safer not to show himself at first, but to open parley with the fellow from shelter until he had made it plain that he was only anxious for friendly relations.

He felt that this instinct had justified itself when he saw Wenger's face. The man's expression alarmed him—inflamed, distorted with an expression of fear, mingled with desperate hate and unconcealed despair. He made a megaphone of his hands and shouted:

"Hi!"

Wenger fell flat to the earth, and flinging his rifle forward swept the fringe of bush with quick fire from his magazine. There was no reply to his fire. Henderson had retreated swiftly again, and the only sound that came to his ears was the thunder of the surf outside and the screaming of the birds that rose from the trees at the sound of gunfire. Wenger crawled rapidly back to the hut, went in and closed the door. The moment he had done that he sat on his bed and again applied his mouth to the rum bottle.

He drank pretty steadily from that time on. In his moments of comparative sobriety he thought of Hobart-Town Harry. He imagined the fellow in ambush for him in the bush beyond, chuckling to himself in his cruel way. When the vision grew too distinct he drowned it in spirits. In this way he lost count of time. He had forgotten that Gilson was coming. Only a week had passed, but he did not reckon the days as he sat in the perpetual twilight of the room.

At times he had panics, and fired recklessly through the door at some imagined foe, but often he would fling down his rifle and lie on the bed doing nothing. He had taken the pearls from his pocket again and put them in the box. There was no longer any attraction in them. The box lay on the table and he did not look at it.

Henderson lived on the fruit of the island, and sometimes collected shell-fish and baked them on a fire he made on the outer beach. The absence of natives was remarkable, though not inexplicable. He was tired of his own society; his plans for getting his fiancé out from home seemed already impossible. He was stuck here forever, he told himself pessimistically, with only the madman in the closed house for a fellow resident.

Utter boredom at last drew him back toward the spot where the recluse endured his endless twilight. Curiosity pricked him to go over to see if the fellow was still behind closed doors, but when he came to the edge of the jungle common sense suggested that it would be utter folly to get shot for the sake of gratifying an idle curiosity. He felt in his pockets for his last cigarette, lighted it and sat down.

As he smoked there in the hot, brooding silence, his eyes absently gazing through a chunk in the branches of a shrub before him, he saw the door of the hut open and the man come out. He was carrying his rifle and a wooden box and laughing in a high-keyed voice. He was barefoot, and stood for a moment looking across the open space before he took the box in his right hand and threw it far from him.

Henderson's gaze shifted to the box, which had burst open and lay in the sand. The crack of a shot drew his attention back to the door of the hut, where he saw Wenger lying across his rifle on the ground, without movement.

He knew afterwards that Wenger had pulled the trigger of his rifle with his toe, but at the moment he did not know what had happened. It was no time for hesitation, and he dashed out and across to the fallen man.

"Mad, of course," he said as he rose from examining the body. "Shot himself, poor devil."

There was nothing to be done for Wenger, so he left him and went quickly over to the box. He gave a gasp of astonish-

ment as he saw what it contained, and held the pearls in his palms with the sunlight shimmering on their iridescent loveliness. A fortune; but how could he dispose of it? He put the pearls in the box again and stared thoughtfully down. Then he went back to Wenger, with the box under his arm, and searched in his pockets for something by which he might identity him. He found nothing but a gun-metal cigarette-case with the initials "W. W."

He buried Wenger later, and then hurried away to think matters over. The whole affair was a mystery to him. Why had the man come there alone with this treasure? The pearls were graduated, pierced for stringing, no pearler's chance find, but a collection accumulated over many years. The mystery baffled him—the mystery of Wenger who had been broken by the menace of a shadow, though he was master of a treasure of immense value.

When Gilson turned up later he knew more, but not all. The skipper had arrived with the divers, the diving kit expecting to find Wenger ready to begin work on the bank, but he found instead a man he had never seen before, a new grave under the palms, and a problem for which he could only provide the sketchiest solution.

"But you are lucky, anyway, old fellow," he said to Henderson, when the latter showed him the pearls. "This is poor old Waldner's property, or I'm a Dutchman. Some crooks shot him up one night in Sydney, and there's a reward of twenty-five thousand dollars offered for the stones."

Henderson started.

"Good heavens! Then this chap——"

Gilson nodded.

"Must have been in on the deal. The joke of the thing lies in the fact that the authorities suspected Hobart-Town Harry, a Sydney crook. But that needn't worry you. I'll give you a passage back there, and you can hand in the stuff and cash in on the reward."

"But why did this chap go dotty?" Henderson inquired. "Case of conscience or something?"

Gilson shrugged.

"It looks like it," he said.

They left it at that, but in a hole in a hollow just behind the hut a tall man, still clutching an automatic, lay head downwards, with a broken neck. It was Harry. He had, as Wenger surmised, escaped the men hired to do away with him and had followed the traitor to the island to torture and kill him.

When Wenger twisted his toe around the trigger of his rifle and died Hobart-Town Harry had already been dead many days.

ATTEMPTS TO HOLD UP A POLICEMAN

PATROLMAN JAMES McNAMEE of the East Thirty-fifth Street Station was walking at Thirty-ninth street and Third avenue recently, when he saw two persons acting in a suspicious manner. He challenged them, and one, a Mexican, turned on him with an oath, shouting, "Put your hands up or I'll kill you," and attempted to fire a revolver. Finding that it refused to go off, he hit the policeman in the face with it, causing lacerations of the nose and lip. Aided by a citizen who was passing, McNamee threw himself on his assailant, and disarmed him after a short struggtle. The companion escaped.

The "bad man" turned out to be Manuel Ruiz, 21 years old, a laborer, of El Paso, Texas. His revolver was loaded except for one chamber. To this the patrolman probably owes his life. Ruiz was arrested, charged with assaulting and attempting to hold up an officer, and with carrying firearms without a license. He was held without bail for examination. Doctor Kaplan of Bellevue Hospital treated the officer for a lacerated scalp.

The Boaster's Reward

By DALE D. KIER

THE autumn night was dreary. Flying clouds passing swiftly before the moon shut off its faint light entirely from the sodden earth, where pedestrians in the city streets sought shelter from the chilling east wind. It was a night when folks close doors and windows and settle before the fireplace with a good book or for a cozy chat.

By midnight every house on Corning street was dark save one. This was the residence of Judge Lawrence. It was a pretentious dwelling of red brick, set well apart from its neighbors in the midst of spacious neatly kept grounds.

Light shone from the windows of a room on the first floor, and hidden in the shadow of some bushes which grew beside one of the windows was a man's form, bent nearly double as he peered beneath the partly drawn shade.

No one in Corning street would have recognized the prowler had they seen him, but his identity was familiar to any of the notorious crooks from Pasco alley. Any yegg who chanced to come along would have recognized Boast McCammon, and his mind would have been filled with apprehension for the safety of the aged man within the room busily arranging papers in the massive desk.

There was a day when Boast, the leader of his gang, had been brought before Judge Lawrence on a burglary charge, had been found guilty and was sentenced to ten years behind the bars.

Ten years is a long sentence, as Boast realized at the time. When leaving the courtroom he yelled back at Judge Lawrence:

"Some day I'll get even with you for this."

It was characteristic of Boast to make such a threat. He had received his nickname because of his boasting. He liked to brag; and above all things he delighted in tantalizing members of the police force by writing them anonymous notes pertaining to mysterious crimes, some of which he had committed himself. It was his boast that he could write such notes and leave no clew to the writer's identity. If the police had their suspicions of the author, they had no proof against him.

The crouching figure by the window brought his eyes on a level with the uncovered portion of pane, and gazed long and steadily at the man seated before the desk. Just then footsteps sounded in the street, and he drew back into the bush until his form was hidden by its leafy branches. It was a patrolman passing on his beat, but a good half-hour would elapse before his return. Now was the time for Boast to act.

Swiftly and silently he made his way to the rear of the house, where a window slid softly up at his touch. After carefully removing his shoes he crawled through the opening. Then, with a flashlight in one hand and a shining object in the other, he made his way with the surety of one who knew his bearings straight to the library door.

Boast suspected that door was unlocked, just as he imagined that the rear window was unfastened. The few servants of the Judge's household were in their rooms. The crook knew it was the Judge's custom to remain in the library every night until nearly midnight. His informant was a servant who had been in the house for the past two years. Judge Lawrence did not suspect he was harboring a pal of the man who had vowed to be revenged some day, a convict

whose prison term had expired only a week previously.

The Judge had finished his work and closed the massive desk. He rose from his chair, and turned to see a burly form standing across the room. For the space of several seconds the two men measured glances; then, his lips parting in an evil smile, McCammon said quietly:

"Sit down."

Judge Lawrence obeyed. He had always been noted for his great composure and self-control. Now, although he must have realized the seriousness of the situation, neither his face nor actions betrayed fear. He said nothing, merely waited.

Boast spoke again at length:

"Wasn't expectin' a visitor tonight, I reckon. Surprised to see me, I take it; but I bet you can guess what I've come for."

Judge Lawrence made no reply. Plainly he did not intend to plead for mercy. His coolness angered McCammon.

Taking a step nearer, and waving his revolver threateningly, the crook snarled:

"When you gave me ten years up the river I said I'd get square, and now's the time to do it. Have you got anything to say?"

"You were guilty of crime, and deserved the sentence you received." The old man's voice was low and calm, and there was a touch of pride in his tone as he added: "I did my duty, and would do the same again."

"Oh, you would," cried Boast, angered at his failure to terrorize his victim. The next second he sprang forward. His hand that held the weapon rose and fell several times, bringing down the butt end with terrible force on the gray head. One low moan came from the Judge's lips as his body slumped forward and hung limply over the arm of his chair.

"That old score's settled," the crook muttered, a satisfied expression on his face.

Convinced that his evil deed was well done, he switched off the light and silently left the house by the way he had come.

James Clarkson, a new arrival in Silverton, a western mining town, read in a newspaper a brief account of the slaying of Judge Lawrence. The news story stated that although no clue had been found as to whom the murderer might be, suspicion pointed to Boast McCammon, who had been lately released from prison. The suspicion was based on a threat that McCammon had made at the time sentence had been imposed, and was strengthened by the fact that the latter's whereabouts could not be traced. But efforts were being made to locate him.

No one would ever think of associating James Clarkson, the quiet and respectable gentleman of means, with Boast McCammon, the ex-convict.

The means which Boast had acquired a few days before the murder, by a daring hold-up, had enabled him to take an apartment in the best hotel Silverton afforded. There he was safe, he decided, and able to enjoy a life of ease and luxury such as he had often dreamed about.

He had absolutely nothing to fear, Boast told himself. True, the Eastern police had his photograph and fingerprints, but they would never be able to recognize him now from his Rogue's Gallery picture. The clever disguise he had assumed would prevent that, and as for the fingerprints—he would take care that they never got those of James Clarkson.

With each day that passed he grew more confident of his security. He spent hours dreaming of how detectives were working on his trail, hours in gloating over the way he had baffled them and forced them to give up the job. Judge Lawrence's murder and Boast McCammon's disappearance would go down in police history among the unsolved mysteries.

But as time went on Boast became weary of his imaginings. As he saw no further mention of Judge Lawrence's murder in any of the papers he came to the conclusion that the police, to cover their search for him, were pretending that they had dropped the case. And then, one day at the beginning of spring, Boast was seized with a mischievous desire to do that which he had often done in the past. He wanted to fool the police by sending them an anonymous note relating his crime. The more he thought of it the more eager he became to

do it. It could do no harm, and it might do good, in that it would set his enemies to searching for him in a section of the country far remote from where he was. Further meditation convinced him that what he contemplated doing was essential to his safety. It might keep prying detectives away from his present location.

From the hotel clerk he purchased some blank stationery, then going to his room he carefully composed his message, and sealed it in an envelope addressed to the chief of police in the city where Judge Lawrence had lived. This envelope he enclosed in another, which he addressed to a trusted pal of his own who lived in southern Florida. The pal was instructed to mail the enclosed envelope.

This done, Boast settled down again to new and pleasant imaginings. In a few days search would be made for him in the South; and while they searched he could laugh at them in his Western refuge.

He was sitting on the hotel veranda dreaming of this several days after sending the letter, when he saw a stranger coming up the steps.

"Rich young idler," Boast said to himself, as he noted the man's natty attire—checked sport suit, patent-leather shoes and white gloves.

To the crook's surprise the stranger came directly toward him, right hand extended, and a most engaging smile on his lips as he exclaimed:

"Why, hello, Carrol. Didn't expect to find you here."

It was all so unexpected and quickly done that before Boast realized it he was shaking hands with the man. Then he said:

"You've made a mistake, mister. My name ain't Carrol, it's Clarkson—James Clarkson."

"I beg your pardon," the stranger apologized. "I met Mr. Carrol here two years ago, and certainly thought I had run onto him again. You bear a remarkable resemblance to Carrol."

After a few further observations the stranger went indoors, leaving Boast in a slightly uneasy frame of mind. A feeling of apprehension grew on him, particularly as he remembered that firm grip on his hand. Why, he could not have told, but he began to wish that handclasp had been avoided.

After a time he rose and made a pretext of going to the clerk's desk. There he scanned the register. The new arrival's name was given simply as J. S. Smith, San Francisco.

Boast felt somewhat relieved. The man was not from the East, therefore he had nothing to fear from him. He felt still more confident after he had met the stranger at the dinner table and engaged him in conversation.

It was two o'clock, and Boast was sitting in the hotel lobby, peacefully smoking a good cigar, when he felt a light tap on his shoulder. He glanced up to see the barrel of a revolver uncomfortably close to his temple. And then he heard the stranger's smooth tones saying:

"Hands up, Boast! I've got you!"

The crook had no other alternative but to obey. And the next instant he felt steel bands snap around his wrists. With their touch came a full realization of what had happened, and a shudder of horror went over him as visions of imprisonment and the electric chair came before his mental view.

Dimly he was wondering how it had come about. The detective's voice, speaking as if to himself, informed him.

"Every crook's bound to make some fatal mistake. Your letter writing was your undoing, Boast. If you had not written that note, you might still be enjoying your safety and freedom. It told us you were here. Then all we had to do was come here and identify you. Your fingerprints would do that, and a hard clasp of that glove of mine did the trick nicely. So come along, Boast."

"Wait," Boast cried in amazement, "you said that letter told you I was here. How could that be when——"

"When you tried to have it mailed in Florida?" asked the detective. "Why, my dear Boast, "you are guilty of what I just said—a little oversight that every crook is bound to make in time. That note you sent us was written on this hotel's special blank

stationery, and you neglected to notice the watermark in the paper——"

"Blast it!"

"And you failed to think your pal in the South was being shadowed for another crime, and was arrested at the time your letter arrived. You did not give him your address, of course, but the post-office stamp on the envelope told us where to look for you."

A groan of despair escaped the crook.

"Why didn't I think of them things?" he asked haltedly.

"Because, like all crooks, you couldn't apprehend everything. It's the weak spots in all crooked deals that give a law-breaker away, if the detective on the case is smart enough to find the weak spots. And I guess we found yours. Come along now, Boast; we've got to make a little trip back to the town where you killed Judge Lawrence."

HOW CRIME IS BRED

WILLIAM TRAVERS JEROME, New York's old fighting District Attorney, used to have some very pronounced views about criminals.

"It comes down fundamentally to this," he once said, "the people who commit crimes are bad men who are unwilling or unable to restrain their vicious impulses. Good people don't commit crimes. People who are afraid don't commit crimes. The fear of punishment restrains many.

"But when you make your prison life so pleasant, and become lax in your methods of detection and prosecution, you remove the principal deterrent to crime. With baseball games, movies, radio, lots of food and pleasant surroundings in prison, your criminal isn't going to be seriously deterred, especially if the chance of detection is slight.

"Most of the criminals I have known weren't worth while reforming. And even your reformed criminal is more liable to succumb to temptation than the unrepentant old-timer whose prison experience has been so unpleasant that he doesn't want to repeat it.

"I am not much in favor of long terms. I believe in shorter prison sentences with sterner and more rigorous discipline. The diet should be just sufficient to maintain strength. The prisoner should be hungry from the day he enters till the day he leaves, and he should be worked to the point of exhaustion every night. His work should be such that it will be useful to him in after years, but it should be hard, exhausting labor.

"The percentage of those who are mentally diseased who commit crime is relatively small." He said if most of the criminals were insane, the fact would be borne out in the number of transfers from prisons to insane asylums, but that number, he pointed out, was relatively small.

"It is the bad man," he said, "who commits crime because he will not restrain the vicious passions of anger, revenge, envy and greed."

Mr. Jerome said he had no use for the theories that the great mass of criminals were naturally sick and should be treated as invalids rather than as bad men. England's rigorous methods of punishment, as reflected in her prison discipline, has resulted in suppression to a marked degree of crime in that country.

Reformation and medical treatment of diseased criminal mentalities have their places in the scheme of penology, Mr. Jerome agreed, but such measures are secondary to punishment.

Concerning the general cause of the prevalence of crime, Mr. Jerome said there had been a general moral relaxation due to the world war. In time that would correct itself. He did not believe that temporary economic conditions, non-employment and hard time had a definite relation to the commission of crime. The criminal, he pointed out, wasn't interested in employment in any of its phases.

With Eyes and Nose

By RALPH E. DYAR

PART TWO

THE evening visit of the newspapermen to the Thornley home resulted in no further discoveries or developments. In due course, however, headquarters in St. Paul forwarded a report which provided the *Star-Gazette* with a sensational front-page story.

The fingerprints found at the scene of the crime were unmistakably those of Charles Braden, arrested in the Minnesota city three months before for vagrancy, and given a thirty-day sentence in the workhouse.

He was described as being about thirty years of age, 5 feet 9 inches, 155 pounds, swarthy complexion, black hair and smooth face, distinguished by nervous twitching of the left eye, three missing teeth and a slightly malformed ear.

A photograph accompanied the description, and the *Star-Gazette* published the likeness with the urgent request that any one who had seen the original communicate at once with the paper or the police.

It was generally predicted that the request would be complied with in the course of a few hours, but even after days had passed no one could be found who admitted seeing the original of the picture, and finally Kendall, prompted by Best, whose idea it was, induced the publisher of the *Star-Gazette* to offer a reward of $5,000 for the capture of Thornley's assailant dead or alive.

One evening about two weeks after the tragedy Alice Revling asked the editor to call. He guessed, however, that Carol had prompted the invitation, and so it proved.

"I have a business decision to make," the girl confided, "and I'd like the benefit of your advice."

"Usually an editor is the last person consulted on a matter of money," he answered, with a smile.

"Just the same I think your opinion is apt to be better than that of Mr. Fairchild, the banker," she exclaimed, "because you know people where they live."

"What does Fairchild advise?" he asked.

"Well, you see Peter Cushner wants me to sell the mine to him, and Mr. Fairchild says I'd better—to save what I can from the wreck."

"I happen to know," said Kendall, "that Cushner is a big depositor as well as stockholder in Fairchild's bank. You don't suppose that that would alter the cashier's opinion?"

"It's just on points like that that I knew you would be a help."

"I think that motive might tip the scales," Kendall decided, and after a moment added: "What is Cushner willing to pay for the mine?"

"Fifty-eight thousand dollars."

"That's a good deal of money, Carol."

"I know; but father's debts will total ten thousand more than that; and besides, father rated the mine as being worth a million."

"You've thought of managing it yourself?"

"Yes, but how can I?" she exclaimed. "After I scraped up enough to meet the delayed payroll it left nothing for the future, and it may be several months before the mine will be paying."

"Suppose we recover that $29,000?" Kendall queried.

Her eyes shone as she answered: "I'm sure we could make a go of it then."

"And if we don't recover it?"

"Then I'm afraid we'll have to sell," she admitted regretfully. "Otherwise, Peter Cushner will get the mine anyway. That's what he told me: If I don't take what he offers, he'll get the mine for nothing."

There was a trace of despair in her voice. Kendall thought of Peter Cushner's coarse face, with its little, piggish, watery eyes; then he glanced at the lithe-limbed, spirited girl whom the old skin-flint was willing to cheat out of her inheritance, and his face flushed with anger.

"You were right," he declared finally. "The human factor is a big one in the present situation. How much longer do you think you can hold out?"

"Ten more days, I should think; perhaps two weeks; not much longer."

He leaned toward her impulsively, his eyes glowing.

"My belief is you should hold on like grim death as long as you can," he advised earnestly.

"Good for you!" Alice Revling approved, breaking a long silence. "Just what I told Carol myself, and I've got five thousand in my own name which I insist she must use."

"I have half as much more which might help a little," Kendall added.

"You're both wonderful, but I'll not take a cent from either of you," Carol protested. "The risk is too great."

"I'm not so sure of that," Kendall said slowly, "because I have a hunch that one of these days we're going to recover that twenty-nine thousand."

"You think so?" Carol flashed, sitting bolt upright with excitement. "That means that you have reasons, doesn't it?"

"I suppose he's referring to that $5,000 reward," Mrs. Revling conjectured, "and it does seem as if that ought to prove effectual; but on the other hand, suppose this Braden has been killed and robbed in turn, you'd be no better off than you were before."

"Maybe Mr. Kendall doesn't mean the reward," Carol remarked quietly, and only she saw the quick, revealing look which the editor gave her.

"Do you mean that?" Mrs. Revling queried.

Kendall shook his head.

"Possibly," he countered, "and again, possibly not," and that was as much as his aroused questioner could get him to admit.

While they were talking, Stacey Revling, a well-poised, athletic type of man in a smart suit, entered the room with an affectionate pat for his wife and a brisk cordiality of greeting for the others. Kendall observed a livid mark above one of the newcomer's eye-brows, and Best's reference to a scandal flashed over his mind, and the reporter's statement that Thornley's assailant would carry away some mark from the encounter. But Revling, who had noticed the editor's glance, explained:

"Did that with my brassie practicing on the golf course early in the morning several weeks ago." After a perfunctory comment or two, the conversation drifted to other subjects.

Whatever the editor's theories and hopes, there was no outward evidence of any kind that the mystery of the Thornley murder was approaching solution. Other sensations, other killings, other crimes replaced it in the columns of the *Star-Gazette;* official interest in the affair became jaded; while the public clamor for vengeance, which had volleyed and thundered at first, waned into a muttering and then silence.

Yielding to the persuasions of her friends, Carol finally consented to accept the money which they offered, insisting, however, that both of them should be assured a generous share in the mine's earnings if it ever reached a paying basis.

The additional thousands, however, were soon exhausted, and no further capital or credit was to be found.

Banker Fairchild told the editor frankly, brutally, that he wouldn't advance another cent; and following this interview Kendall had a mental image of Peter Cushner smacking his thin, colorless lips in anticipation as he waited greedily to claim the mine with all its rich prospects.

He counted his personal loss as nothing,

and he knew that what Alice Revling had advanced meant little more to her than a few luxuries more or less; but with Carol it was different. She had wanted to keep the "Homestead" mine as a living monument to her father, and to wipe out his honorable debts. Its loss, he felt, would break her butterfly spirit of adventuring Youth on the wheel of failure and defeat.

In spite of all these spurs to decisive action, however, he could do nothing, and the strain of those long, fruitless, depressing days of inactivity showed on Kendall's face, showed in the weary wrinkles around his eyes and in the listless droop of his usually erect figure. He was by nature a man of deeds, and in the present situation he was forced to play a waiting game, a game of weary and prolonged passivity.

The managing editor went off on an early vacation, and during his absence Kendall, as was the custom, enjoyed the seclusion of his superior's private office.

Another day was drawing to its close, and in the street outside harsh-voiced newsboys were making vocal the newest tragedy.

"Just five weeks this morning since the Thornley murder," Kendall remarked soberly to an elderly man seated on the opposite side of a littered table. The remark was acknowledged by a slight canting of the head, then a change in the expression of his visitor's care-worn face told the editor that a third person had entered the room. Kendall looked up.

"Hello, Best," he greeted the reporter. "You know Chief Powell, I guess."

The newcomer smiled affably.

"Familiar to me as my landlady," Best acknowledged, extending his hand. "Glad to find you here, Chief; gives me a chance to say good-by."

"Leaving the city?" the other inquired with spiritless civility.

"Gave us notice last week," Kendall explained. "Here's your pay-check, Best. I suppose that is what you're after?"

The reporter took the proffered envelope.

"Thanks," he said heartily. "Guess I'll be going. My train leaves at six-fifteen."

"You're all packed, aren't you?" Kendall inquired with a glance at the travel-battered bag which the reporter had been swinging back and forth nonchalantly. "Sit down for a minute; I've got something interesting to tell you."

"If that's the case, guess I'll have to spare you a little time," Best smiled and dropped into the chair which Kendall kicked toward him.

"It's this way," the editor explained. "Chief Powell and I think we've located the man who killed Thornley."

The reporter gasped.

"You mean they've caught Braden?" he demanded.

"No, Braden is dead," the Chief put in unemotionally.

"Dead!" exclaimed Best.

"Killed in a wreck," Powell informed him. "But excuse me, gentlemen, I've got to go."

"Was the money recovered?" Best inquired.

The Chief edged toward the door; then he turned with his hand on the knob seemingly forgetful that he had announced his departure.

"The money hasn't been recovered," he remarked, "but we rather think it will be shortly."

"Where was this wreck in which Braden was killed?" the reporter inquired. "Funny I haven't heard about it."

"You wrote an account of it for the paper," Kendall informed him quietly.

Best seemed to register just the slightest hint of shock.

"But look here," he exclaimed. "I guess you fellows are kidding me. The only wreck I've covered was that one in which the only fatality was a bum who was riding the rods; and unless I'm very much mistaken that smash-up occurred four days before the murder."

"That 'bum' was Braden," the Chief informed him laconically.

"But he couldn't have been," the reporter cried. "That hobo couldn't have been Braden because four days after his death Braden's fingerprints were found in the Thornley home."

"Just the same it was Braden," his informant insisted grimly.

"What makes you think so?" snapped the reporter.

"We dug him up," Powell remarked dryly.

"Dug him up"—sharply—"when?"

"A month ago, wasn't it, Dave?" the Police Chief asked. "It was Kendall's idea, and a good idea, too; deuced good. The peculiar thing about it was Braden's right hand was cut off *just as your boss predicted it would be.*"

"Kendall predicted that?" Best cried. "What would any one but a pervert want with a cadaver's hand?"

"That's easily answered," the Chief chuckled. "It could be used like a rubber stamp around the Thornley home, then if the real criminal wore gloves he could feel pretty sure that the police, finding the other fellow's fingerprints, would search for the dead man, not a living one."

"Frame the corpse, as it were," Kendall amplified.

"A new way to cover up an old crime," the Chief mused. "The beauty of this scheme was that the hobo's fingerprints were on record in St. Paul, and when that fact was brought out, as it was sure to be, no ordinary person would doubt that Braden was the guilty party."

"At the same time," Kendall put in, "Braden's body was buried in a pauper's grave; and Thornley's murderer must have reasoned that there wasn't a chance in the world he'd ever be traced to his last resting place."

"Let me see if I get this," Best gasped, kneeding his big white soft hands together. "You figure that some pal of Braden's killed Thornley, used his friend's dead hand to conceal the crime he had committed, and then made good his escape?"

"That's just what we thought at first," replied the Chief. "We doped it out that the criminal was somebody who knew Braden and it seemed likely 'twas a pal."

"What made us think otherwise was a news item in a St. Paul paper following Braden's arrest in that city," put in the editor, and picked up a clipping from his desk. "This item is a detailed description of Braden, and unquestionably the reporter that wrote it would have been able to identify the man after his death, even though his face was badly mutilated, as the dead tramp's was."

"What are you driving at?" Best explained.

"We learned that the name of the reporter who wrote that item was Clay Best," the editor replied evenly. "You see, I happened to know that you worked for two or three months on a St. Paul sheet."

"What if I did write that item?" the reporter demanded, his face blanching. "It doesn't prove anything."

"Merely that you were in a position to recognize Braden," Kendall pointed out, "and that you were certainly aware that his fingerprints were a matter of record."

"Yes, that's true," admitted the reporter, "but I didn't recognize that tramp."

"We might have believed that, too," said the Chief, "if it hadn't been for one little thing."

"What do you mean?" Best demanded.

"We found your fingerprints in the box Braden was planted in," answered Powell.

"You weren't so careful in the grave, you infernal ghoul," he went on, his voice rising to an emotional pitch for the first time that afternoon. "The possibility never occurred to you that somebody might dig up that dead body, and you carelessly left your mark on the coffin when you were cutting off the hand."

All of the swagger and assurance and injured dignity in the reporter's manner vanished from his crumpling body; his face was ashen, his eyes staring.

"So you know exactly why you are under arrest for the robbery and murder in the Thornley home," snapped the Chief.

"I didn't kill Ross Thornley," the accused reporter declared. "I intended to, but it wasn't my hand that struck him down.

"Shut the door, Chief," he begged, "and I'll tell you just what happened."

Chief Powell complied with the request, but kept a cautious back to the panels as he said in a perfunctory voice:

"Anything you say will be used against you, you know."

"What I am about to say will clear me

of the charge of murder," the reporter cried. "You can't hold me for that. You can't send me to the chair for what I planned and imagined, so long as I didn't commit the actual crime.

"It's true that I recognized Braden when I was sent to cover that wreck, in spite of the fact that the body was badly mangled. His hair and teeth and a twisted ear made me suspect it was that St. Paul vagrant, and an old letter in his clothes made me sure.

"Thornley had sold me a few shares of stock in the Homestead mine, and had talked with me about the money end of it. I knew he was taking the pay-roll up there every week, and I knew that on that Saturday he was going to have an extra big roll.

"More than once I thought what a cinch it would be to rob him, but I never quite dared make the try. I knew, though, that the average bull stakes everything on the Bertillon system, so I felt dead sure that if that tramp's fingerprints were found on the scene of the crime the dicks would never think of suspecting any one else; so before dawn Friday morning I dug into Braden's grave—he'd been buried in the potter's field the day before—and secured his right hand just as you figured it out.

"Saturday morning I got into Thornley's house through the cellar, slipped up the back way into the library and hid behind some draperies. It was still dark and I was going to wait until Thornley got the safe open, and then to knock him over the head with a piece of pipe. At about four o'clock I heard Thornley coming downstairs, but just then the front door-bell rang, and when he entered the library he had a visitor with him.

"Naturally, two men were more than I cared to handle, but I was forced to stick to my hiding place. From there I was able to hear all that was said, and I gathered that Thornley had arranged to take somebody with him on that particular Saturday."

"Who?" the Chief asked sharply.

"Cushner."

"By George, Dave, you hit it again," exclaimed Powell..

"Cushner himself is coming here a little later," the editor remarked. "He supposes I intended to start negotiations between him and Miss Thornley to sell him the mine at his own price, but my real object was to face him with the confession which I was confident of wringing from you."

"Then you didn't think me guilty?" the reporter exclaimed in astonishment.

"I can't say that," Kendall replied "What I felt was that you must have been an accomplice. After suspecting one or two others, I learned that Cushner had arranged to take the Saturday morning trip to the mine. When asked about it, he claimed that he had called it off late the previous evening by telephone, and his assertion was almost impossible to disprove. At the same time what could be made of the unbolted doors and the table set for two?"

"Finish your story, Best," demanded the Chief.

"Soon after Cushner came, Thornley opened the safe and stuck a bundle of bills in his bag," Best continued. "Then they started squabbling, and went after each other so hot and heavy that they forgot they were going to have breakfast together in the next room.

"Thornley accused Cushner of bad faith and dastardly acts, and after he'd been called a vile name Cushner caught up a poker from the hearth and gave Thornley a terrific swipe with it on the side of the head. He struck him a second time after Thornley had fallen, but I think the first blow must have killed him."

"And when did he discover you?" the Chief asked.

"Almost at once," was the answer. "It was growing light. In my excitement I must have moved the curtains. Anyway, Cushner yanked them aside and saw me. He made as if to attack me in turn, but I threatened him with my own weapon and he thought better of it."

As he made this statement, there was a light rat-a-tat-tat on the office door, and the speaker paused.

"Cushner," whispered the Chief. "Quick, tell us the rest."

"We reached an agreement," Best continued in lowered tones. "We had to. I was to have the money and he the mine, if he could get it, as he felt certain he could; so we used the hand, leaving only three or four marks so as not to overdo it. We threw the furniture around to create the impression that the assailant would be carrying some scratch or hurt as a result of the struggle supposed to have taken place, and planted the glove both to explain why the fingerprints all came from the same hand, and to speed up that information from St. Paul. Afterwards we burned the hand in the grate."

The knocking without was repeated, this time loudly, impatiently.

The Chief turned the knob quickly and opened the door. Peter Cushner shambled listlessly into the room.

"As soon as you are at leisure, Mr. Kendall," he began impatiently, "I'll talk with you about the mine."

The Chief waited until he saw the newcomer's startled glance fasten upon the pale, distraught features of the reporter, then he bellowed raucously, unexpectedly:

"Your accomplice has confessed, Cushner, and you're under arrest for Ross Thornley's murder."

The big, bent, haggard-faced man grasped the table for support.

"It's just as well; I'm glad it's over; only Thornley had no right to call me those names; he brought it on himself," and with this he dropped his face into his cupped hands, his shoulders heaving.

Powell gave a peculiar shrill whistle, and almost before the last throaty note had sounded, he was joined by three burly plainclothes men.

"Tell me," demanded the reporter, "why'd you wait a whole month to spring this trap?"

"We figured you had the money well concealed," Kendall explained, "and would only take it out of hiding when you were ready to leave the city. We counted on your doing that as soon as the excitement died down a bit."

"The dough was hid," Best admitted, "in a place you'd never have found it, no matter how hard you tried."

"Don't think you haven't been watched day and night," Chief Powell put in. "You never had a Chinaman's chance of getting away, nor Cushner, neither, and that being so we could well afford to wait a few weeks to get the dough."

"The money's in the valise, I suppose," Kendall surmised, touching the bag with his toe.

"Yes, it's there"—dully—"every penny of it."

Peter Cushner raised his head.

"That means the girl wins," he announced. "Before that's spent the mine will be paying big."

"Let's go," said the Chief.

"Before we leave, I wish Kendall would loosen up as to how he managed to dope this out," Best pleaded. "Braden might have left those tracks for all you knew, and you wouldn't have looked up that news item unless you had some sort of hunch first."

"Just another case where the cleverest criminal makes a slip," Kendall explained. "You remember those fingerprints I found on the library door—the faint ones which the police overlooked? I pointed them out to you, as perhaps you remember; but I didn't call your attention to the thumb mark on the opposite side. If I had you'd have realized that the fingerprints were so placed they could only have been put where they were naturally if their owner had been standing on his head five feet in the air. That detail, coupled with the peculiar smell, which was undoubtedly the odor of the burning hand, put me on the right track."

"Just a matter of eyes and nose," chuckled Chief Powell as he signaled his men to march out with the prisoners.

A New Two-Part Story Begins in the next number

Entitled

"BEATING THE BURGLAR ALARM"

By JOE BURKE

A Gripping Story!

The Flim-Flam Artist

By POLICE-CAPTAIN HOWARD

"THE amount of money a flim-flam operator can obtain in one day," said the old detective, "depends upon the character and condition of his victims. He enters a store where all hands are busy. 'Can you accommodate me with the change of a twenty-dollar bill?' he asks.

"The clerk or cashier takes the note, examines it, and returns with say one ten and two five-dollar notes. 'I want to put one of these in an envelope. Will you oblige me with a clean bill?' asked the crook.

"If he is accommodated, he says: 'I am sorry to trouble you so much, but I would like to have small change for this five.' If that is changed he hands the clerk a bill, fails to give him the dirty bill for the clean one, and walks out. When the clerk figures up he finds he is five dollars shy.

"Another system has been in operation against paying-tellers of banks. A man with one arm in a sling asks for change of a note of large denomination, and, taking his place directly in front of the teller, asks him to place the money in a large envelope. The teller hands over a lot of bills, already counted, and in packages with a strip of paper pinned around them. The operator bunglingly tries to place the bulky package in his inside coat pocket, and, working with one hand only, naturally attracts the teller's attention. After several unsuccessful attempts he gives it up and hot-temperedly says: 'Oh, give me large bills or something I can put in my pocket easily.'

"The cashier has just counted the bunch of small bills, or knows they are just so many in a package, and seldom counts them when they are thrown back. He throws out a requisite number of notes of larger denomination. The hand on the broken arm of the operator has meantime extracted as many bills as possible while he was trying to put the big envelope in his pocket. If the teller does count them over, he is stuck, because the operator claims that the teller didn't count them when handed out, and they were never out of the teller's sight.

"When the flim-flammer has not got large capital to operate with, he is contented to walk into a restaurant and put down a twenty-dollar note. The cashier proceeds to count out the change, and often slides in a few trade or silver dollars. 'You have dropped some money on the floor,' says the crook. The cashier looks, and, sure enough, there is a bill lying behind the counter. He stoops to pick it up, the flim-flammer extracts a bigger note from the pile, and says:

"'Oh, never mind bothering about the change, here is the exact money for my check,' and walks off with the booty.

"The crook had dropped the small bill on the floor to distract the cashier's attention.

"Flim-flam men following circuses are adept at this game. They receive a ten-dollar note to change, and count out the change by having a two-dollar bill doubled on top of a pile which they count over their fingers, clasping the notes in the middle. 'Two and two are four,' they say, counting both ends of the doubled note, and continue in the regular manner to make up the balance of the change, and hand the change to the victim rolled up. The victim thinks he has seen all the change he requires, and pushes it into his pocket without counting it over. And if he comes back and claims he has been short-changed, the flim-flam artist gives him the laugh and defies him to prove it. The moral is, count your change as soon as you get it, for the crook can make you admit in court that you counted the bills with him.

Turned Around

By NELSON A. HUTTO

"ALL human minds are hard to understand," spoke Sergeant Easton to Patrolman Slattery, who sat listening attentively, "but to understand the criminal's mind is the hardest of all. Of course, he is perfectly human when he makes mistakes and gets caught. That is just what any of us would do. But the queer thing about the mind of a man in an act of crime is this—he nearly always errs at the simplest point. In other words, he is too clever. In looking after a maze of intricate details, he overlooks an obvious one."

Sergeant Easton stopped to knock the ashes from his pipe, while Patrolman Slattery, without saying a word, propped himself in a new position. Slattery relished these short talks from his superior. He was a young man with an ambition to go higher and nothing was better, he thought, than advice from this old gray-haired veteran. And Easton, seeing the interest of the younger officer, was not averse to conversation. He liked to talk as much as Slattery liked to listen.

Now, however, the sergeant did not show signs of saying more.

"You mean that the crook's mind is abnormal?" ventured Slattery.

"Abnormal, to be sure, or he wouldn't be a crook."

"And that when he messes up a job he generally falls down on a simple detail?"

Sergeant Easton nodded his head. Patrolman Slattery looked up at the big clock on the wall, saw that it was not yet time for him to report on his beat, and fell to thinking.

"Ratty" Watson closed the door to his room and tip-toed softly down the rickety stairs. It was exceedingly hard for Ratty not to tiptoe, he had done so much of it in his life. He realized, though, that he must walk boldly tonight, and must make the appearance of an honest man, unafraid to meet anybody. Tonight he was to accomplish the thing he had looked forward to for years, and there must be no slip. And Ratty did not think there would be any slip. He had planned things too cleverly.

Reaching the street, he lighted a cigarette and turned down the sidewalk, walking at a brisk pace. As he came out on another street that was better lighted he checked his speed. He felt that it might favor his plans if many people recognized him in this part of the city. And now that the light revealed his features he was not at all hard to recognize. Few people had the unsteady black eyes that gave Ratty his name, nor did many possess his crooked chin or the peculiar twist of the neck.

He strolled down the lighted streets for about an hour and met a number of acquaintances, but did not stop to talk with any one. He took care, in fact, to stay away from the haunts of his closest friends, for he wanted to be alone tonight. Finally he decided to drop in at Ike Warner's restaurant for a light meal. It was late, but it was nothing out of the ordinary, for he did not have regular habits. He entered the place and seated himself at one of the tables near the rear. The restaurant was not crowded, and he decided that this was his chance to think over, for the last time, his well-laid plans.

The day, ten years ago, when Watson had entered the prison, he had sworn to himself that he would "get" Detective Mallory,

Had it not been for Mallory he would have been a free man all those ten years. But the detective had been too much for the crook, and through his own individual work Watson had been caught, and was subsequently sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. Watson had always believed that Mallory had landed him by use of an unfair trick. He had made himself believe that. It did not occur to him that Mallory was doing his duty when he caught him, that he had really done it fairly and squarely, and that he had helped society in doing so. His distorted brain could encompass only four facts: First, he had been an expert safe-breaker, by the touch method; second, through Detective Mallory he had been convicted of a safe robbery; third, the ten years of prison work had hardened his once skillful, sensitive fingers, and he could no longer open safes; fourth, Detective Mallory must pay.

But Ratty Watson did not mean to go to prison. He was going to outwit the police, and they would never find out that it was he who had killed Mallory. He would make none of the slips that others had made. He felt that he had planned everything perfectly.

He had not made the old blunder of threatening his enemy before leaving prison, thus setting the hounds of the law on his trail, nor had he confided in a human soul, and did not mean to do so. The crook had got a place to do honest work after leaving prison; he had gone straight, and now that several months had passed the police were no longer watching his movements.

As he ate he mentally reviewed his whole plan of procedure, and he was surer than ever that there was no flaw anywhere. Why, his plan was perfect. It was simple, but therein lay its perfection. Nothing but some freakish piece of hard luck could cause a hitch. When Ratty finished his meal, he felt even safer than before.

He walked to the soda fountain at the front and ordered a soft drink. As he drained the glass he noticed that he could see the reflection of the wall-clock in the mirror. Absently he pulled his own timepiece from his pocket and compared the times. His heart-beat quickened. The clock on the wall was standard time, and it read exactly ten minutes to twelve, while his watch read seven minutes after. Without turning around, for fear he would attract some one's notice, he tried to appear to be acting mechanically as he reset his watch. Nervously he stepped out on the street.

What if he had not noticed the correct time? He shuddered slightly. It would have ruined everything. He would have arrived on the scene of action about the time the policeman on the beat passed Mallory's house, and he intended to get there fifteen minutes after the officer had passed. He scowled as he thought of his cheap watch. Well, everything was safe now, but if he hadn't noticed that clock——

This incident served to make him use greater caution than ever.

He tried to appear sleepy as he slowly made his way home. If any one saw him going to his room with the apparent intention of going to bed and no one saw him later it might help, should he be suspected. In reality his every sense was alert. He had never been more awake in his life than now.

Presently he turned off the lighted street and made his way to his rooming-house, up the stairs and to his room. When he had closed the door, pulled down the shades and hung a towel over the keyhole, he began to work in a hurry. He removed his clothes and put on a different suit—a new one that nobody had ever seen, as he had never worn it. A clean shirt and necktie also added to the change in his appearance. When he had finished his cleaning and dressing he went to a washstand in the corner of the room. From one of the drawers he took a small false mustache, and in a moment he had it well fastened to his lip with glue. This done, he surveyed himself in the mirror over the washstand and smiled—if his expression of satisfaction could be called a smile.

This disguise might help a great deal, thought Watson. If it so happened that some one saw him coming out of the rooming-house or in the vicinity of Mallory's house, he would not be recognized. He couldn't bear close scrutiny, of course, but

the clothes and mustache would save him from recognition by a stray glance.

Satisfied that his appearance was misleading enough, he walked to his trunk and, taking a key from his pocket, opened it. He reached down under the things on top and withdrew a jimmy, a pocket-flash and a revolver. On the end of the revolver was a queer-looking device. The shot would never be heard, for that was a silencer. He reached in again and pulled out a pair of rubber gloves. There would be no incriminating fingerprints. Ratty Watson was sure that neither the purchase of the gloves, the revolver nor the silencer could be traced to him. He had worked that all out to perfection.

Then he secreted the weapon and the other things carefully in his clothes and turned out the light. The crook did not leave the room immediately, but sat down on a chair and waited. He did not want to step out on the street, even in his disguise, so soon after his light went out. He had thought all these little points out. This was one time the coppers had to deal with one slicker than they were, he told himself.

After several minutes he opened the door noiselessly and silently moved down the stairs. When he reached the street he walked one block and then hailed a taxi that was standing near by. He would ride to a place within a few blocks of Mallory's house. He felt that it would be safer. As he relaxed on the cushions he smiled. Everything was working fine. He had not even encountered any one along the street. The taxi driver had looked at him rather interestedly, and would probably remember him, but that would only be in his favor. His disguise would protect him.

Watson gave the man some directions, and the car lurched forward and glided down the pavement at a moderate rate. This expense of a taxi was something new to Ratty Watson, but he was sparing no expense of any kind now. As he had sworn to himself that he would get Mallory, the costs were not to be counted. Had not Mallory caused him to spend ten long years behind the big gray walls? It was worth all the planning and expense to make Mallory pay.

As he rode along he thought over the remaining details of his plan. Again he smiled with satisfaction. There would be no hitch—there could be none. He almost laughed aloud as he thought of the police trying to find the slayer of Detective Mallory.

It did not take long to arrive in the vicinity of Mallory's residence. The exact place he had ordered the driver to stop was two blocks from the house, and they soon reached the spot. Ratty paid the driver, and started off down the sidewalk. There was no moon, and scattering clouds almost hid the stars. Nevertheless, Ratty stayed close to the inside where the shadows were deeper. It was much in his favor that this section could afford no bright street lights.

Two minutes later he reached the corner of Mallory's yard and, with a quick movement, disappeared inside. For the last time he gathered his thoughts and went over his plan of action. Mallory's wife and child were away, and the detective was there by himself. Watson knew exactly where Mallory slept, even in what part of the room the bed was located. He knew that it was no great task to get into the house and into the room. The deed done, he would work his way carefully back to his own room and burn everything he had used.

He looked at his watch, saw that the policeman would not be back for nearly twenty minutes, and roused himself to action. He pulled the rubber gloves from his pocket and put them on. Then he moved silently in the shadows to one of the windows. Reaching in his coat for the small jimmy, he went to work swiftly on the screen. It was soon open, and he raised himself into the house without a noise. With extreme caution against making any noise he moved into the next room. Now he flashed on his electric torch. He knew it could not be seen in this room by any one in the street. Stopping a moment, he listened. The blank silence of the house reassured him. He moved to a door at the back of the room and, after snapping off his torch, opened the door by inches. In-

side the room he closed the door and turned his attention to the bed in the corner. He walked up to it and, making sure again that no light could be seen from there to the street, he turned the flash full in the face of the sleeping man.

Instantly Mallory sprang to a sitting posture in his bed, fully awake but slightly dazed by the blinding light.

"Don't make a sound, Mallory," said Ratty Watson softly, "or I'll drill you. I got a good gat, and it's trained on you."

"Who are you? What do you want?" Mallory did not yet seem to comprehend the situation. He was thinking fast, however.

"I'm no common burglar, I'll tell you that, Mallory," Ratty growled. "I'll tell you who I am. I'm Ratty Watson."

He paused as if he expected this to make an impression on the other man. But the detective only grunted.

"I don't believe I know you," he said at length.

"Don't know me, eh, Mallory? Well, I can't hardly blame you. I guess you've sent a lot of guys up just like you did me. What's ten years of life for one poor crook to you, anyway? I haven't forgot you, though, Mallory. Ten years ago you caused me to go to the big, gray house, and I've been there ever since."

"Didn't you commit some crime that deserved punishment?" the officer asked quickly.

"You framed me, Mallory," lied Watson, evading the other's question. Detective Mallory was stalling for time, and Ratty Watson began to sense as much. "You sent me up, and you're goin' to pay," he snapped. "Mallory, I'm going to kill you."

The man on the bed gasped. For the first time he stirred uneasily. He was soon composed, however.

"Don't try that, Watson," he said. "You'll pay if you do. You'll go to the electric chair. You'd better not——"

Ratty Watson snarled and pulled the trigger. There was only a muffled pop from the gun. Detective Mallory sank back on his pillow, and another officer of the law died because he had performed his duty.

Uncertainly Ratty Watson stood for a moment, his right hand trembling. Then he shoved the gun in his hip pocket and stepped quickly out of the room. He would make his way to his room unseen and all would be safe. His features distorted in a grin. The detective had not expected him to act so quick. He had fooled him.

Still, he remembered the last words of Mallory, and they worried him some, though he tried to think they did not.

"You'll go to the electric chair," he had said. But Mallory had been wrong. They would never know. Ratty crept out of the house swiftly but silently. Reaching the hedge in front, he stopped to look down the street and sidewalk. He saw no form in the darkness and heard nothing. It would be easy now to get home. He laughed again to himself. How would they ever fasten the crime on him? They could not. He had been too clever.

With this feeling of satisfaction he stepped past the hedge out on the walk. At the same moment he uttered a little cry of terror and stood stiff, unable to move. Before him stood a policeman. A cold feeling gripped his spine as the officer reached out and grasped his arm with a grip of steel.

"Come clean, you crook," he said. "Tell me what you were doing in Mallory's."

But he got no further. Ratty Watson's last atom of control was gone. It had been too sudden for him. He blabbed out a denial that he was in there, whining piteously all the while. But the patrolman dragged him back into the house and saw what the crook had done.

Patrolman Slattery was speaking to Sergeant Easton the next afternoon. It was his time to talk.

"I guess you knew exactly what you were talking about yesterday, sergeant," he said. "The low-down bum would have gotten away clean, I'm afraid, after he had murdered our old pal, Mallory, if he hadn't done it just as I passed. But just as I was going by, I thought I heard a sound in the house. I was a little suspicious and backed up against the hedge. Before I had stood there a quarter of a minute he almost ran

over me, coming out of the yard. The crook's mind sure takes some queer turns sometimes, all right. He ought to have remembered that a policeman patroled the street. But he forgot it."

Slattery was right in his conclusion, but he was not informed of the real facts. But Ratty Watson knew. As he sat in his cell, moaning over the fate that awaited him, a certain little scene arose continually before his mental vision. It was the scene back in Ike Warner's restaurant. He had looked at the clock on the wall by the reflection in the mirror. It had looked to be ten minutes to twelve, while it was really ten minutes after twelve. He had set his watch twenty minutes behind.

Ratty saw it all now. In the short glance he had given the clock face he had noticed only the position of the Roman numerals. And, of course, they were exactly turned around by the reflection of the mirror.

THEATRE THIEVES

TWO unmasked bandits, about 25 years of age, held up the cashier of the Majestic Theatre, Jersey City, across the street from the City Hall, swept the Saturday's receipts, amounting to $2,500, into a satchel, knocked down the cashier and escaped.

The theatre is one of the best known in the city. The bandits entered the lobby, scanned the pictures on display there and awaited a favorable opportunity to perpetrate the holdup when there was no one in the lobby.

Michael Zena, 21, the cashier, sat in the booth counting over the Saturday receipts. The door of the booth was open, as was that of the safe. The bandits entered and while one "stuck up" the cashier with a gun, the other went to the safe and swept the money into a satchel he had concealed under his coat.

As they turned to leave Zena made after them. One of the bandits yelled to his companion, "Get him!" and the second bandit sprang at Zena, grasped him by the throat, slammed his head against the wall and knocked him down. Zena arose and gave chase. The bandits quickened their pace to a run and soon disappeared.

RADIO CATCHES A FUGITIVE

HOW a policeman in Tucson, Ariz., identified a man wanted in New York on a forgery indictment through a general alarm sent out by the police of this city on the radio was revealed when Henry F. Niemeyer, formerly head bookkeeper for the Eastern State Refrigerating Company, 6 Harrison Street, was locked in the Tombs in default of $12,500 bail.

Niemeyer, who is 24 years old, was alleged to have obtained $20,000 by forgeries, when he fled with his bride from the Hotel Standish Arms in Brooklyn a few months ago. He had been on a salary of $32 a week, and when his employers read of his elaborate wedding they began an investigation and the indictment followed.

The Tucson police notified District Attorney Banton that they believed Niemeyer was the young man who had just acquired part ownership of an electrical business in that city. It developed that Motorcycle Policeman John Bentley, who had arrested Niemeyer twice for speeding, had noticed that description broadcast by the New York police fitted the stranger.

Niemeyer's fingerprints, taken when he obtained a driver's license in New York City, made certain the identification.

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

98 "Counterfeit Clues," by Chas. F. Oursler.
99 "The Cross," by W. S. Ingram.
100 "The Secret Service Mystery," by Hamilton Craigie and Elliot Balestier.
101 "A Crimson Price," by Elliott Lester.
102 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by G. Jacobs.
103 "A Museum Mystery," by Jack Bechdolt.
104 "The Little Red Book," by J. Alexander Young.
105 "A Man from Siam," by Chas. F. Oursler.
106 "The Clue of the Emerald Ring," by B. Poynter.
107 "Hell's Hinges," by Hamilton Craigie.
108 "The Wolf," by Katherine Stagg.
109 "The Brass Button," by Jack Bechdolt.
110 "A Whispering Mummy," by Chas. F. Oursler.
111 "Trapping the Jewel Smugglers," by B. Poynter.
112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaski.
113 "A Clue by Radio," by Capt. Jack Static.
114 "The District Attorney's Secret," by C. Oursler.
115 "A Man From Headquarters," by H. Craigie.
116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
117 "A Scientific Detective," by D. G. McDonald.
118 "Number Nine Queer Street," by Jack Bechdolt.
119 "Trailed by a Private Detective," by Gottlieb Jacobs.
120 "The Mouse Trap," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
121 "A Radio Mystery," by Capt. Jack Static
122 "The Clawing Death," by Beulah Poynter.
123 "A Master of Millions," by Chas. Fulton Oursler
124 "The Secret of Room 13," by Hamilton Craigie.
125 "Six Months to Live," by George Bronson-Howard.
126 "Seals of Wax," by Jack Bechdolt.
127 "When Crooks Conspire," by Harold F. Podhaski.
128 "The Mystery of the Blue Car," by H. Craigie
129 "The Detective and the Law," by Frederick F Shuey.
130 "The Hand in the Dark," by Chas. F. Oursler.
131 "The Trail of a Rogue," by George Bronson-Howard.
132 "The Woman from Nowhere," by Jack Bechdolt
133 "The Time Detective," by Frank Blighton.
134 "The Whispering-Room," by Frederick C. Davis.
135 "One Clue Missing," by Chas. F. Oursler.
136 "The Doom of the Damned," by Joe Burke.
137 "The Consuming Death," by Gilbert Hammond.
138 "Mrs. Deane's Jewels," by Beatrice S. Luisi.
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140 "For Shame," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
141 "The Triple Cross," by Hamilton Craigie.
142 "Blood Rubies," by J. Werner Phelps.
143 "I'll Win! I'll Win!" by Arthur B. Reeve and Margaret W. Reeve.
144 "Phantom Fingers," by George Bronson-Howard.
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147 "The Barrington Arms Case," by Jack Bechdolt.
148 "Hounded," by Frank Blighton.
149 "Direct Action," by Dr. Harry Enton.
150 "The Footprints On the Ceiling," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
151 "The One Chance," by Thomas Ripley.
152 "Weapons of Hate," by Eric Howard.
153 "In Reserve," by Frank Blighton.
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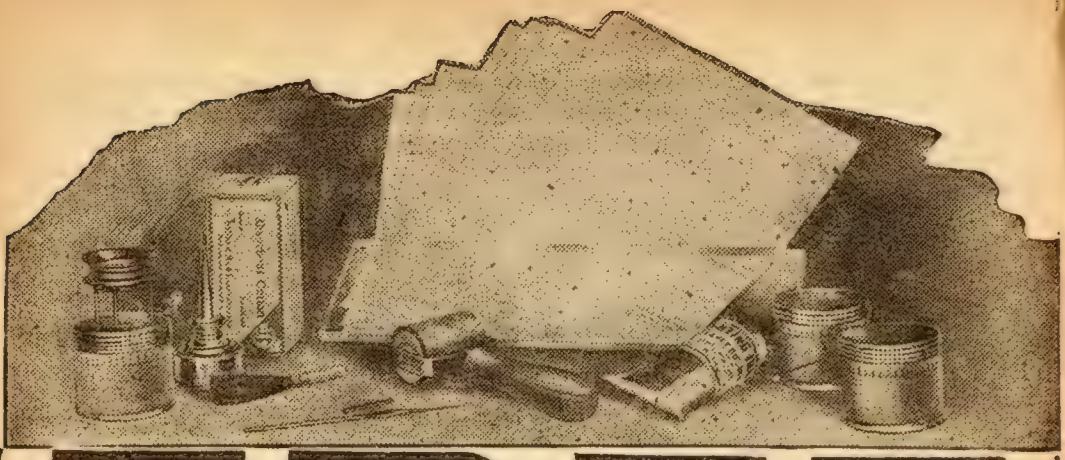

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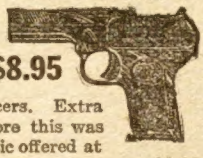

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Finding "The Fountain of Youth"

A Long-Sought Secret, Vital to Happiness, Has Been Discovered.

By Walter S. Dean

Alas! that spring should vanish with the rose!
That youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
—OMAR KHAYYAM.

A SECRET vital to human happiness has been discovered. An answer to an ancient problem which, sooner or later, affects the welfare of virtually every man and woman. As this problem undoubtedly will come to you eventually, if it has not come already, I urge you to read this article carefully. It may give you information of a value beyond all price.

This newly-revealed secret is not a new "philosophy" nor a financial formula. It is not a political panacea. It has to do with something of far greater moment to the individual—human happiness, especially in the later years of life. And there is nothing theoretical, imaginative or fantastic about it, because it comes from the coldly exact realms of the practical where values must be proved. It "works." And because it does work—most delightfully—it is one of the most important discoveries made in years. Thousands already bless it for having rescued them from disappointment and misery. Millions will rejoice because of it in years to come.

The peculiar value of this discovery is in its virtue for lifting the physical handicaps resulting from the premature waning of the vital forces of life, whether due to overwork, over-worry, sickness or the general over-expenditure of nervous energy in the strenuous living typical of the modern day. True happiness does not depend on wealth, position or fame. Primarily, it is a matter of health. Not the inefficient, "half-alive" condition which ordinarily passes as "health," but the abundant, vibrant, magnetic vitality of superb manhood and womanhood.

Unfortunately, this kind of health is rare. Our civilization, with its wear and tear, rapidly depletes

recuperative capacity, and, in a physical sense, old age comes on when life should be at its prime.

But this is not a tragedy of our era alone. Ages ago a Persian poet, in the world's most melodious epic of pessimism, voiced humanity's immemorial complaint that "spring should vanish with the rose" and the song of summer too soon come to an end. And for centuries before Omar Khayyam wrote his immortal verse, science had searched—and in the centuries that have passed since then has continued to search, without halt, for the fabled "fountain of youth"—the means for renewing energy and extending the summer time of life.

Now, after many years of research, joyful reports from thousands show that lives clouded by the haze of too early autumn have been illumined by the summer sun of health and joy; old age, in a sense being kept at bay, and the physical and mental vigor of former years again enjoyed in work and recreation. And the discovery which so adds to the joy of living is easily available to every one who feels the need of greater energy and vitality.

The discovery had its origin in famous European laboratories. Brought to America, it was developed into a product that has won the highest praise in thousands of cases, many of which had defied all other treatments. In scientific circles the discovery has been known and used for several years with extraordinary gratifying appreciation for the success it has demonstrated. It is now put up in convenient tablet form, under the name of Korex compound, for distribution to the general public.

Anyone who finds life losing its charm and color or the feebleness of old age coming on years too soon, can obtain full strength treatment of this compound, sufficient for ordinary cases, under a positive guarantee that it costs nothing if it fails to prove satisfactory and only $2 if satisfied. In average cases, the compound usually brings about gratifying improvement in a few days.

Simply write in confidence to the Melton Laboratories, 2178 Melton Bldg., Kansas City, Mo., and this wonder restorative will be mailed to you, sealed in a plain wrapper. You may enclose $2 or, if you prefer, just send your name without money and pay the postman $2 and postage when the parcel is delivered. In either case, if you report within ten days that you are not satisfied, the purchase price will be refunded on request. The Melton Laboratories are nationally known and thoroughly reliable. Moreover, their offer is fully guaranteed so no one need hesitate to accept it. If you need this widely praised and remarkable rejuvenator, write for it today.

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